B. R. AMBEDKAR

LIFE, WORK and RELEVANCE

Edited by

M. L. RANGA

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Babasaheb Ambedkar was by all standards a great man. A visionary statesman, a great constitutionlist and an equally great parliamentarian, a creative thinker, an incisive analyst, and an extraordinary student of history, economics, sociology, philosophy and politics, he waged a relentless struggle against the denial of social justice, economic opportunities and human dignity to the submerged humanity throughout India. He struggled, all through his life, to establish a new social order based on principles of liberty, equality and universal brotherhood.

For a proper understanding of modern India, and our present day problems, it is essential that this great man should not be neglected. Rather, he must be studied in all seriousness and from different standpoints—of course, objectively and scientifically.

Unfortunately, however, this is not being done—astoundingly, even in our universities, the so-called 'temples of learning'. There is a conspiracy of silence on Babasaheb there. Then, misinformed, blind admirers and unthinking critics have also misrepresented him. As a result, we hardly have any full portrait of the great man in colours true to history. The present work is a humble but serious effort in supplying the desideratum.

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2000

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For
Mrs Savitree Jotiba Phule (1831-97),
the first woman rebel against
social injustice and inequality
in modern India.

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Preface

Dr B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) was indeed a great man in the real sense of the word. A visionary statesman, a great constitutionalist and an equally great parliamentarian, a creative thinker, an incisive analyst, and an extraordinary student of history, economics, sociology, philosophy and politics, he waged a relentless struggle against the denial of social justice, economic opportunities and human dignity to the submerged humanity throughout India. He struggled, all through his life, to establish a new social order based on principles of liberty, equality and universal brotherhood. For a proper understanding of modern India, and our present day problems, it is essential that the man should not be neglected. Rather, he must be studied in all seriousness and from different standpoints—of course, objectively and scientifically.

Unfortunately, however, this is not being done—astoundingly, even in our universities, the so-called 'temples of learning'. The academia here, whatever their professions, carry a clear bias, if not contempt, for Dr Ambedkar. Like the proverbial three Chinese monkeys (also Bapu's pets), they do not want to see him, hear him or speak about him. There is a perfect 'conspiracy of silence' *vis-a-vis* the great man.

Besides this conspiracy of silence, Babasaheb has suffered from yet another injustice—misrepresentation—at the hands of the vested interests and the misinformed, blind admirers and unthinking critics. As a result, we hardly have any full portrait of the great man in colours true to history. The present work is a humble but serious effort in supplying the desideratum.

I am grateful to many persons who have helped me in doing this work. Most of all, my thanks are due to Prof. K.C. Yadav for his valuable help in planning and execution of this work and to Dr Gail Omvedt, Dr A.C. Pranjpe, Dr D.C. Ahir, Dr S.K. Gupta, Prof. J.P. Misra, Dr M.M. Goel, Dr J.V. Raghavendra Rao and

Mr S.K. Chahal for making available their write-ups for this work. My thanks are also due to Mr Ajay Jain, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, for producing the book so beautifully and that, too, in a very short time.

M.L. RANGA

Introduction

Until a few years ago our scholars evinced hardly any interest in either Babasaheb Dr Ambedkar or his work. To say that he was 'nobody' for the Indian academia before independence, would not be altogether wrong. Strangely, even the advent of freedom did not make any appreciable difference for quite some time. A biographical sketch here or a hagiographical tribute there, were all that could be counted as 'Ambedkariana'. It was only in 1990-1 when the V.P. Singh Government decided to celebrate his birth centenary that serious writings began to appear. A perusal of these writings shows, however, that though some of these writings have been done ably and faithfully, yet an Ambedkar, as full and complete as he was, has not reached us. I do not, and cannot, claim to have supplied the desideratum here in full. But I hope to have made a beginning.

II

The present work consists of eight chapters wherein the specialists have tried to understand the life, work and relevance of Dr Ambedkar in correct historical perspective. In Chapter 1, The Becoming of Dr Ambedkar, Dr. A.C. Pranjpe, a social-psychologist, tries to understand Babasaheb through the mechanism of learning, perception and motivation as they developed in his attempt to meet the needs within and pressures from without. In Chapter 2, we have a critique of Babasaheb's work—in short, empowerment of Dalits—22.5 per cent of India's population who have been forced to live like 'the wretched of the earth' for centuries out of number. To begin with, the author, Dr S.K. Gupta, examines here at length as to how Babasaheb perceived the Hindu social order in its different aspects. His focus is specifically on his counter-hegemonic discourse based on egalitarian ideas with a view to understand the realities in life and

to correctly define identities, aspirations and purposes, to use them to exterminate discrimination and denial in life that the Dalit suffered, by dissent, protest and opposition. This is followed by a detailed discussion by Dr M.M. Goel on Babasaheb's economic thinking and its relevance today (Chapter 3) for mitigating our present-day suffering, specially that of Dalits, because of poverty, dearth and deprivation.

What Babasaheb said was pretty difficult to translate into a working reality. Secondly, the vested interest was too powerful to fight and too well-entrenched to be dislodged. The one and only way which could help the Dalits to do the impossible, counselled the Dalit Messiah, was through education—good, effective education, to be precise. In Chapter 4, Prof. J.V. Raghavendra Rao has made this whole matter the focus of his essay, 'Dr Ambedkar on Education'. In Chapter 5, Gail Omvedt has discussed in brief why Ambedkar and Gandhi differed from each other. Why they could not see eye to eye on many matters? And what of these two 'bigs' is relevant today?

Dr Ambedkar found the Hindu religion incapable of giving either spiritual solace or social equality to the Dalits. He decided to renounce the religion of his forefathers in 1935. He made a search for a new religion and ultimately went to Lord Buddha (1956) where he found peace, solace, equality and honour in abundance. He joined Buddhism (1956) and asked his people to do so. Dr D.C. Ahir discusses this great conversion and its effects in his essay (Chapter 6).

Most people, Babasaheb believed, looked at the problems of Dalit the wrong way. Furthermore they often showed that the black was white and yes was no, down was up and stop was go. Understandably, they did not see eye to eye with Babasaheb who believed that the problem of the Depressed Classes was not a social problem.

> We take strong exception to this view, he said. We hold that the problem of the Depressed Classes will never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands. If this is true, and I do not think that the contrary can be maintained, then the problem of Depressed Classes is, I submit, eminently a political problem and must be treated as such.[1]

In Chapter 7, Prof. J.P. Misra examines at length the above position taken by Babasaheb and the political strategies that he devised on the basis of his thinking, to solve the problems of his people.

Have the constitutional and political safeguards which have, thanks to Babasaheb, come to Dalits today, improved their life conditions to

any appreciable extent, ask some persons at the slightest whisper of Dalits and affirmative action?[2] The answer is: 'Not exactly!' For, though the Constitution provides for reservation of seats for them in the legislatures; jobs have been made secure for them; untouchability is a cognizable offence now;[3] and there are stringent laws against atrocities against them;[4]. There is a provision both at central and state levels to help the Dalits to get over their educational deficiency, economic deprivation and so forth.[5] Yet the Dalits continue to suffer. Despite the ban, untouchability still exists almost everywhere, in every state, in some measure or the other. Atrocities are still being perpetrated on them. What is the way out, then, one may ask here? The answer takes us to Babasaheb. He has given solution to the problem: education, organization and agitation.

No study on Babasaheb can be complete without attempting to answer the question of his relevance—relevance for today, relevance—not only for Dalits but for others too. Let me substantiate. India is facing a large number of problems today, like communalism, regionalism, parochialism, linguism, casteism, separatism, and so forth. As a result, at times the very existence of the nation seems to be in peril. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate solutions of any of these problems in the framework of nation-building that we make use of these days—the Gandhian framework, the framework of the leftists and rightists, for instance. The only framework which can serve the purpose at the moment is the one given to us by Dr Ambedkar. Dr K.C. Yadav and S.K. Chahal have discussed this important but much neglected framework of nation-building of Dr Ambedkar in Chapter 8.

III

I believe, the essays given here will present Dr Ambedkar in colours true to history. Besides this, these will also show how far Dr Ambedkar is relevant today.

NOTES

1. *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches,* Bombay, vol. II, d.d., p. 504.
2. That is, reservations.
3. Articles 17 declares that 'untouchability is abolished and its practice in

any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "untouchability" shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.' For details pertaining to the issue, see the annual reports of the Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, New Delhi.

4. Ibid.
5. For details see *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XXVI, no. 33, 17 August 1991, pp. 1913-15.

1

The 'Becoming' of Dr Ambedkar: A Socio-psychological Study

A.C. Pranjpe

A psychologist's view of human life emphasizes the process of 'becoming' a person through the previous incarnations of his soul. Even a saintly person like Chokha Mela, who was born in an untouchable family, was reconciled to the status ascribed to him because he believed in the underlying doctrines like the Law of *Karma*, etc. Ambedkar's place in the history of untouchables is unique because he was not reconciled to his fateful existence. The reason why this happened must be located partly in the nature of the historical era in which he was born and partly his individual personality characteristics. In the rest of the paper, an attempt will be made to search for the combination of historical and personality factors that made Dr Ambedkar a uniquely great man.

Dr Ambedkar was born in the Mahar caste, a martial community. The Mahar have retained their martial traditions for at least a period of four to five centuries. Several Mahars in Shivaji's service were known for their honesty, loyalty and valour. Toward the end of the Peshwa rule, several Mahars joined the British army and fought against the Peshwas in their last struggle for existence. The Mahars set a high record of bravery in the two World Wars during Dr Ambedkar's lifetime. The Mahars have been well aware of their traditions and are proud of it. They have also been regarded as bright and smart-looking people. Several Mahar families, being in the British army, became literate and were exposed to a variety of settings in the world in a period where such education and exposure was denied to a majority of the untouchables and other unprivileged communities. This background was congenial for a development of confidence and self-respect that was unusual among the untouchables. Ramji Maloji Sakpal, Dr Ambedkar's father, was a military man. He and his wife were very religious and belonged to the Kabir cult,

which does not believe in differences based on caste and birth. One may locate the roots of the tremendous self-respect, confidence and religiosity of Dr Ambedkar in the training he received in his family.

Ramji Sakpal had acquired a knowledge of the English as well as the Marathi language and became a head master of a military school with the rank of a Subedar-Major in the army. He was a friend and admirer of Mahatma Phule, a great social reformer of his times. That he was actively involved in social affairs is indicated by the fact that Ramji Sakpal had tried to petition the British Government to rescind their orders for banning the recruitment of Mahars in the army. He approached for help, and thus came into contact with, Ranade, another social reformer. He taught his children English translation and encouraged his son in his education through thick and thin. This was an unusual advantage for Bhim in the days of his childhood. Thus, compared to other untouchable children of his times, Bhimrao Ambedkar received an opportunity for, and encouragement in, the education which enabled him ultimately to be first untouchable ever to obtain a doctorate.

The childhood of Dr Ambedkar was characterized by the type of privations, frustrations, injustices, insults and humiliations to which his community was subjected. Several psychologists believe that traumatic and frustrating experiences in childhood produce lasting effects on the personality of the individual. Studies of Negro personalities in America have shown that the effects of experiences characteristic of growing up in a ghetto lead to confusion of self-identity, lowered self-esteem, perception of the world as a hostile place, and other types of debilitating effects (Pettigrew, 1964). Some studies in America as well as in India suggest that there are deep effects of lower class membership on the self-concept of the members of unprivileged communities that may be described as a type of namelessness, facelessness and nobodyness (Erikson, 1968; Pranjpe, 1970). Thus, it might, be said that Dr Ambedkar grew up in a situation that would lead many to a mental state of nobodyness. But psychologists also know that there are great individual differences in the way in which persons may respond or adapt to a similar environmental situation. The life history of Dr Ambedkar reveals to us the unique way he responded to the situation in which he found himself.

Bhim passed his matriculation examination in 1907 when he was sixteen years old. This was the period of his late adolescence which is

said to be a time in the human life-cycle particularly sensitive to the formation of the self-concept or the development of a psycho-social identity. By this time young Bhim had developed a very strong urge for higher education which was well-nurtured by his father. It was during this period after matriculation that he met K.A. Keluskar, who nurtured the urge further by offering active help in extending his education. Shri Keluskar presented him a copy of his book *Life of Gautama Buddha*, after Bhim passed his matriculation examination, and then later arranged an interview with Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda for assistance in his education. Both these acts of this elderly well-wisher proved to be accidents of phe-nomenal importance in the life history of Ambedkar and consequently to the history of India.

Adolescence is described by sociologists as a period of transition from the role of a dependent child to that of an independent adult. It is also described as a period for acquisition of the society's technology and culture. Technologically advanced societies need a longer period for training of their adolescents before they can be ready to perform complex jobs as adults. Most societies support their youth through prolonged periods of training without expecting them to be economically productive members of the society. During this period the youths are allowed to postpone their financial commitments to their family and community. In this sense the psychologist Erikson calls adolescence and young adulthood a period of 'moratorium'. It is a psycho-social moratorium in that a young person can use this period to explore (through reading, observing, travelling and experimenting with his life to enrich his personality) and find his 'niche', or unique place, in the complex society (Erikson, 1968). Most members of underprivileged sections of a society are denied such a moratorium, and in the days of Ambedkar's youth, most members of his community were denied it. Many untouchable youths found institutes of higher learning inaccessible. Education had been a monopoly of the Brahmins, and most of the masses were illiterate. By that time, however, a few enlightened persons in the vanguard of social change of that era, namely, persons like Keluskar, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda and Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur, gave young Bhim a helping hand. The latter two gave him the financial support with which he could pursue higher education, including a stay in foreign lands for advanced training. Translated in to technical terms, they granted him a moratorium.

An adolescent is on the threshold adult life. By this time he has acquired a set of physical and intellectual capacities that have reached their biological peak of maturation. Many a youth uses the period of moratorium to attain a further development of the inner potentials and to search for a place in society where the potentials can be actualized. This is also the period when one makes plans for the adult life and tries to acquire a 'philosophy of life' in the sense of a set of principles that will guide a course of action in the future. Not all youth are aware of the need for acquiring a philosophy of life. Although some youths develop an implicit belief and value-system, many are not consciously aware of having one. There are great individual differences in this respect, the origin of which is difficult to account for.

Ambedkar fully utilized the moratorium granted to him to develop his personality in this manner. He was that type of person who develops a strong cognitive need, an impulse to explore the world around them. Moreover, his urge to read books and master ideas and ideologies was unusually high. Those who have known him only slightly knew what kind of a bibliophile he was. One needs only a quick glance at the underlined pages of books in his collection to become acquainted with his kind of dedication to books and his kind of scholarship. It is reasonable to guess that young Bhim was cousciously in search of a philosophy of life right through the period of his adolescence. That he had not only thought clearly about his own philosophy of life but also about the purpose for having one is clear from a speech on this topic broadcasted on radio during the last two years of his life. At that time he said 'Every man should have a philosophy of life, for everyone must have a standard with which to measure his conduct' (quoted by Keer, 1962, p. 455). As is well known, Dr Ambedkar was a great student of comparative religion and such studies are often part of a man's search for a personal philosophy. His interest in Buddhism dated back to his boyhood, as he once said in a reply to a question after conversion to Buddhism (Keer, p. 421). His exposure to Buddhism must have been at least as early as the age of 16, when Keluskar gave him a book on the life of Buddha. One does need any technical knowledge of psychology to see that ideas that come from one's benefactor may be received with interest and probably very favourably and warmly.

It is important to note in this context that moral philosophy was one of the topics he pursued in his study at Columbia University.

Among other subjects were social sciences: political science, anthropology, sociology and economics. It is not surprising that a person deeply affected by the vicissitudes of a social and economic system would try to understand the ways in which social and economic systems function. The place where he explored the principles of the social sciences (and probably explored the roots of his personal philosophy at the same time) is not unimportant, it was in Columbia University of the New World, almost, literally under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. It was probably in this phase of his life that he discovered and absorbed in his mind the basic tenets that were to be at the core of his philosophy of life, namely, liberty, equality and fraternity. (One wonders whether he could find any equality in the land of liberty and prosperity.) It must be noted at this point however that in the radio speech mentioned above, Ambedkar said the following: 'Let no one however say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha' (Keer, p. 456).

It is interesting to note the topics of the master's and doctoral thesis written by him in 1915 and 1916 respectively. The first one was entitled 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. The latter was entitled 'National Dividend of India—A Historic and Analytical Study' in its thesis form and 'The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India' in its book form. Another paper read by him in an anthropology seminar while doing his M.A. was entitled 'Castes in India, their Mechanism, Genesis and Development'. These titles indicate that he was interested at that time in the historical analysis of Indian social and economic systems. His interest in the study of the genesis of the caste system particularly indicates that he was trying to understand at that time the historical background on the basis of which he could interpret the nature of his existence as a person born in an untouchable caste in India. It may incidentally be noted that he was doing his studies at an advanced level in modern social sciences in a historical period when such study was uncommon even among the members of the advanced communities of India. One of the earliest interpretations of the genesis of the caste system (based on the principles of modern anthropology and sociology) attempted by an Indian scholar was published more than a decade after Ambedkar wrote a paper on this topic. Ghurye's book, *Caste and Race in India*, was published in 1932.

The implications of the above observations are twofold. First, Ambedkar's interest in these topics is interpretable as being related to the phase of his life history when he was developing a geographic-historical framework in which to interpret and define his life-experience. Second, the period of history of India in which he tried to trace the roots of the caste system was the period of early development of social sciences in India. This, as an accomplishment of a person born in the untouchable community, made him head and shoulders above not only the members of his community, but also the members of the most privileged sections of the society. This latter aspect of his studies partly accounts for his unique place in the Indian historical scene.

Thus, when he returned to India in 1917, he was already an accomplished person, a young adult of 26, with exceptional academic qualifications, a doctorate from a prestigious 'foreign' university. He was ready to offer his services to the society, services which could have been best used in the role of teacher or researcher in an institute of advanced studies. Having received financial help from the princely state of Baroda, he was bound by an agreement to work in the service of the State of Baroda for ten years. Accordingly, Dr Bhimrao joined his duties in Baroda soon after returning to India. The Maharaja wanted him to work eventually as his minister of finance. In view of giving him some administrative experience he appointed Dr Bhimrao as his military secretary. Normally, a young man in such a position would be regarded to be in an enviable position, with excellent prospects for a life of prosperity, high social status and respect, and attendant satisfactions. However, the young Doctor was not treated as an officer or a scholar but as a mere untouchable. His assistant, much inferior to him in educational and economic status, treated him like dirt. As an untouchable, he was not provided with drinking water and his assistants would fling the files at him rather than respectfully handing them over. It was hard for him to find accommodation in town. Since no Hindu could let his place to an untouchable he somehow found a place in a Parsi inn. Later, even the Parsis drove him out of the building and the young Doctor was literally on the streets. On complaining, the Maharaja sent him to his Diwan, who proved to be of no help. The situation was worse than destitution plus insult put together. No words can describe the humiliation and intense frustration suffered by an extremely capable young man. Common sense may describe the state of the mind of

this person as an explosive mixture, but we have no knowledge of the mental chemistry of such states of mind. An extreme case and a unique situation is indeed difficult in general terms. Psychologists speak of a general law which says that frustration most commonly leads to aggression. Finding oneself cornered, even a cat or a child may strike back. But a counter-attack is not always possible. This is particularly so when the adversary is overpowering. Obviously, the young man was not facing a few odd hostile individuals, but a whole hostile world around him. Individuals have their own characteristic was of responding to a situation. Psychologist Karen Horney has suggested three typical ways of dealing with a conflict: moving towards, moving away from, or moving against, the source of frustration or conflict. Another psychologist, Thomas Pettigrew has observed that members of the Depressed Classes also commonly react to their oppressors this very way, i.e. moving away from or moving towards the oppressor; or moving against the oppressor. Dr Bhimrao could have chosen the following alternatives: try to be a second class Brahmin by towing the line of the upper castes; or be indifferent to them and become absorbed in his narrow, private world. But to do this would be unlike him. For he knew that there was no use fighting directly against the particular persons who denied him water and accommodation, or caused him a personal insult, because the *cause* of the situation was not these persons but the social philosophy which supported a social system based on inequality. Thus, his initial response to the immediate situation in Baroda was one of withdrawal. He returned to his shack in the Bombay labour district. It is important to understand his withdrawal as an *initial* response or as part of a long range strategy.

Dr Ambedkar was not yet twenty-seven at that time, and he had already been married for ten years. His wife was pregnant when he first left India. A child was born when he was away, it died in infancy. His wife had suffered privations during her husband's stay abroad. Both of them were in their young adulthood. This is a period of life when a normal young couple seeks mutual intimacy and love while being prepared to care for the young. Young Dr Ambedkar had been unsettled in his first attempt to enter an administrative career. He was, therefore, forced to explore alternatives for this lost career, his urgent and immediate need being to find a source of support for himself and his family. During the following

period, therefore, he tried whatever jobs he could find. He was a private tutor for some time, a common extra job for a well-educated youth. He tried to be an adviser to dealers in stocks and shares and helped a Parsi gentleman in correspondence and accounts. But his social status as an untouchable proved to be a hindrance once again. He acquired a relatively stable job when he was appointed a professor in the Government Siddhartha College of Commerce and Economics. Although his students did not take their untouchable teacher seriously, and his colleagues would not let him drink water from the pot reserved for them, he managed to somehow survive in the job. In the meantime, the Depressed Classes Mission Society held their All-India Conference in Bombay. This was presided over by his benefactor, the Maharaja of Baroda, and was attended by national leaders like Tilak, Pal, Jaykar, Patel and others. Dhananjay Keer points out in his biography that Dr Ambedkar did *not* participate in this conference (Keer, p. 37). This seems to indicate that he was yet undecided regarding his policy on an issue which was to be his life's mission. It is reasonable to suggest, that like many persons who were young adults he was still searching for a special and unique place in society.

But it did not take him long to decide. He started a fortnightly journal in 1920 and named it *Mukanayak* or Leader of the Silent. He also started his experiments in social life by presiding over a conference of untouchables in the princely state of Kolhapur. There he met another great personality of his times, Prince Shahu Chhatrapati of Kolhapur, a meeting which proved to be another important accident in his life.

About this time, Ambedkar made an important decision in his life: to go abroad to seek education for the second time. It is rather difficult to understand why he made such a decision when he already had a valuable doctoral degree to his credit, had secured a 'permanent' job as a professor which was not too bad, after all. He had already started getting into social life and had started working for a cause he was gradually identifying himself with, namely, the uplift of the untouchables. A knowledgeable and influential person like Shahu Chhatrapati had already recognized him as a person who 'will shine as front-rank leader of all-India fame and appeal' (Keer, p. 42). It seems reasonable to guess that Ambedkar did not wish to stay in the Government job as a professor because it would have hampered his freedom to work for his people, at times against the British Government. But then, why should he not have chosen to explore

other modes of subsistence while continuing his experiments with social work and journalism? Why did he choose at the young age of twenty-nine to go away from his wife and family again, after having been through the ordeal of separation and privation once already? Why did he try to postpone his commitments to his family and community again?

Did he try to go back to England simply because he did not find a doctorate enough of a qualification? Or did he seriously decide to become a lawyer and Barrister-at-law, so he could be both independent and prosperous in his career? Obviously these are hypothetical questions. Moreover, the hero of the life history under consideration is not with us any more, so that the questions could be asked him directly. Any attempts to pose such questions now and to answer them on our own would be speculation. We hope, at the same time, however, to profit from such exercises. Erik Erikson, who has attempted to explain specific life histories as well as the general nature of life-cycles, has suggested that many a creative youth assigns himself a prolonged psycho-social moratorium, i.e. a period free from adult responsibilities, so that he can experiment freely with social roles he may like to occupy as an adult and explore perspectives he may like to adopt (Erikson, 1956; 1962). He has suggested, for example, that George Bernard Shaw spent several years in his twenties away from home, experimenting with a life-style and a literary style, before he developed his own creative style of being and writing. Taking a similar approach to the study of life-cycles, I would suggest that Dr Ambedkar, in extending his academic career abroad, assigned himself an extended psycho-social moratorium. Shahu Chhatrapati, whom he had met, at the conference of untouchables in his state, and Ambedkar's personal friend Shri Bhathena provided the necessary financial support.

Dr Ambedkar went to London to do his D.Sc. in economics, while he simultaneously worked at his bar examination. Besides this, he tried to find out precisely what it was that the Hindu society had done to the untouchables, and what it was the British rulers had done to the whole of India. His studies were not purely 'academic' problems of the ivory tower, nor was he interested in pursuing abstract impractical, hobby research. A distinction is sometimes made between a scholar and an intellectual: the scholar accumulates facts and opinions, an intellectual organizes them the way he sees them from the point of view of *his own* life-experience. Dr Ambedkar was

an intellectual. His dedication to the world of ideas was life-long and intimately connected with the way he experienced the actualities in his life. Ambedkar's studies in London have the kind of assiduity and compulsive nature that characterize many an ideological youth in his young adult phase of identity formation. It is reasonable to guess that young Bhimrao used the period of his extended moratorium to further explore his ideas about a philosophy of life while, at the same time, searching, defining and consolidating plans for the social role he was assigning himself for his future life.

Dr Ambedkar returned from London after completion of his D.Sc. and Barrister-at-law in 1923. He was thirty-two years old at that time. He had made a preliminary attempt at his roles as an administrator, professor, etc., and also in being a leader of his community, before going to London. Based on this experience he apparently formed an accurate judgement of his capacities and skills, as well as his goals. Shahu Chhatrapati had prophetically suggested that he was going to be the saviour of untouchables and lead them in breaking their shackles. Dr Ambedkar at once became a self-appointed spokesman and leader of the untouchables. His stay in London must have helped him to consolidate this view. Now he worked to develop his own strategy in undertaking his work and *his style* of leadership. Developing one's basic life-plan and unique *style* of being oneself are significant aspects of the formation of a personal identity.

Ambedkar began his work in all seriousness in 1923—three years after the dynamic national leader Lokmanya Tilak had passed away. By this time Gandhi had already emerged as an all-India leader and had begun his efforts in developing Hindu-Muslim unity. Savarkar was released from the Andamans and was placed in Ambedkar's native district of Ratnagiri. Both of them were to make great efforts for the removal of untouchability in their own ways.

Initial effort in the uplift of untouchables had begun a long time ago. Noteworthy among them, in Ambedkar's native province alone, were the pioneering efforts of Mahatma Phule, followed by those of Shahu Chhatrapati and Karmaveer Shinde. Legislative efforts in helping the Depressed Classes were underway in Bombay. S.K. Bole and Gholap were trying to introduce Bills for allowing free access to public water resources for untouchables. Dr Ambedkar could have easily joined these ongoing programmes, continuing what others had already begun. He, however, wanted to coordinate and organize the

various separate ongoing efforts and also give them a direction in *his own way*. Within a year after returning to Bombay, therefore, he took the initiative in starting a new central institution for the cause of helping the advancement of the untouchables. The institution was named the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha. The accent of its programme was on education and on representing the grievances of the untouchables to the Government. Although this institution was blessed by the important upper class Hindu and Parsi leaders, its chief organizers were Ambedkar and his lieutenants, Shivtarkar and Jadhav. For Ambedkar had realized by now that the efforts of the upper caste Hindu leaders were motivated mainly by their 'big-brother' attitude. He did not think that their efforts would be enough to promote the cause of improving the lot of the untouchables. Rather, he strongly disliked the patronizing attitudes of the caste Hindu leaders.

It seems that some members of the oppressed community who join organizations for their uplift that are started and dominated by members of the dominant community often develop feelings of dependence. They tend to believe that the leaders of the dominant community will protect and care for their welfare like a big brother would care for his own younger brother. He hated such attitudes of dependency among the untouchables. As pointed out by Keer (pp. 60-1), he greatly accented the need for self-help, self-elevation and self-respect among the untouchables. He believed that a real change came about only when the slave is made aware that he is a slave, and his heart burns with hatred and an impulse to revolt. He exhorted his followers that it was their *birth-right* to get food, shelter and clothing in *their land* and in *equal* proportion with every other individual. He also impressed upon their minds that self-help was the best help. Obtaining education was suggested as the most effective way of helping oneself. In his opinion education did not mean simply being literate as was implicitly believed by the upper caste do-gooders of those days. That Dr Ambedkar cared more for higher education is evident from the fact that he started colleges and not primary or secondary schools, as, and when possible. He set high standards for his followers, and left the spadework of spreading literacy to other reformers.

During the years to follow, Dr Ambedkar continued to organize the untouchables in their struggle for emancipation. He went from place to place holding meetings and conferences. Besides legal practice he taught mercantile law to an evening class run by a private

institute of accountancy for about three years, for his subsistence. After this, he was appointed as a professor in the Government Law College in Bombay. While Mahatma Gandhi was building up his leadership among the Indian masses against the British Government in his own way, Dr Ambedkar was building his leadership among the untouchables in India in his own style. Within three years after his return from England he led his first major attack against the custom of untouchability by 'liberating' the public water tank at Mahad for the untouchables. During this 'satyagraha' (this technique was being popularized by Gandhi during the same historical period), Dr Ambedkar burnt a copy of the *Manusmriti* which codified and legitimized the Hindu practice of untouchability. This offensive was effective in awakening his followers, while warning and shocking his adversaries. Within a short period, he placed himself in his self-chosen role as the chief spokesman of the untouchables in India. It is not necessary for the purpose of this paper to deal with the historical details of Dr Ambedkar's mission; these have been recorded by biographers like Keer and Khairmode. It is necessary, however, to note a few salient aspects of his career. The point to be noted at this juncture is that society recognized his role, as reflected in the invitation by the British Government to participate in the Round Table Conference in London as a representative of the Depressed Classes.

Dr Ambedkar's leadership of the untouchables led him to the next important phase of his life, namely, his conflict with Mahatma Gandhi. As is well known, the conflict centred around the issue of the separate versus joint electorates to be granted to the untouchables in the new legislative reforms. Mahatma Gandhi as well as most other Hindu leaders did not want to concede to Dr Ambedkar's demand. The latter, as a leader of the Depressed Classes, wanted to win the best possible deal for his followers. This conflict between Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi must be viewed in a socio-psychological context. The situation of Dr Ambedkar was a creation of historical forces. The Mahatma was trying to bring the history of the British Empire to an end, but at the same time he was also trying to end the religious and caste conflict in India. In resolving to change the course of the historical forces during their own life-times, both Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar had identified themselves with the role of chief spokesman of the same community. Each had tried to build his leadership in his own manner. When

one claimed that he was the chief spokesman of the untouchables, the other was offended, and a conflict of egos was inevitable. This conflict came to a decisive phase when Mahatma Gandhi decided not to let the Hindu society be divided on the issue of separate electorates. Ambedkar, as a counter move, decided not to be browbeaten into an agreement that would sacrifice the vital interests of the untouchables. The result was 'bargaining' between the two sides.

'Bargaining' is a type of behaviour commonly observed in interpersonal or group conflicts. Social psychologists have tried to develop theory and method for the study of bargaining behaviour—the game theory being one example. One common technique for an experimental study of such behaviour asks volunteer subjects to play a game with a given set of rules and observe the kind of gains. It is difficult to view the bargaining between persons like Ambedkar and Gandhi in the light of any game theory because of the highly innovative strategies invented by such creative persons. As is well known, Mahatma Gandhi used his novel technique of the hunger strike to press his demand for the abolition of separate electorates for the untouchables provided by the communal award. Dr Ambedkar was regarded as a 'villain' who endangered the Mahatma's precious life by not acceding to his demands. Pressure from every corner of India mounted as the hunger strike went on, and Dr Ambedkar was forced to give up his demand for separate electorates. However, a large number of seats for his men in the legislatures were, through the joint electorates, granted to him as a compromise.

The truce between the caste Hindus and the untouchables could not be a permanent one. Following the 'Poona Pact' between Dr Ambedkar and the caste Hindu leaders, Mahatma Gandhi intensified his campaign for the removal of untouchability. Dr Ambedkar and his followers did not support his programme. Both pursued the same cause, but in an independent and different manner. Basic differences of opinion emerged between the two leaders in a controversy over temple entry. Although Dr Ambedkar had fought for it, seeking temple entry was regarded as a means of attaining equality and not an end in itself. He was not really interested in begging for entry into the temples where dogs, but not the untouchables, were allowed. The real goal was to abolish the doctrine of four *varnas* which legitimized inequality. Although Mahatma Gandhi was all in favour of abolishing untouchability, he regarded *chaturvarnya* as an inviolable doctrine. Dr Ambedkar's target was the

root cause of the trouble; he was not interested in trying just to alleviate the symptoms.

Since Hindu leaders like Gandhi were not ready to give up the very basis of the caste system, Dr Ambedkar thought that the only way for the untouchables to save themselves from their plight was to get out of the system altogether. He announced his decision to convert himself and his followers to a non-Hindu faith in a meeting of 10,000 untouchables at Yeola in October 1935. This announcement was a great shock to the Hindus. On the other hand, it was a tantalizing source of hope for the non-Hindu leaders who saw in his announcement, a possibility of bringing millions of untouchables into their fold. In the period that followed, therefore, several leaders of non-Hindu religions tried to persuade, tempt, intice or even bribe him in an attempt to attract him to their faith. Dr Ambedkar did not fall prey to such attempts. The only possibility which he considered more seriously than others was Sikhism, insofar as he sent some of his followers to study this faith at their religious centre in Punjab. But this overture faded out within a short period.

Although Dr Ambedkar announced his decision regarding conversion as early as in 1935, he waited for twenty long years before actual conversion. A question as to why he took so many years to act on his decision may be posed in the same spirit in which the earlier question regarding his departure for England for a second doctorate degree was posed. One may suggest a possible answer that the announcement about the decision for conversion could have been a calculated strategy to increase his bargaining power. Thus, threatened caste Hindu leaders could grant him greater concessions to avoid a loss of millions of their brothers. Had Dr Ambedkar chosen to join the Muslim camp, the balance of power would have been decisively in their favour. Indeed that would have resulted in very far-reaching consequences in the history of India. But the reason for Dr Ambedkar's delay must be traced beyond the political exigencies of the situation. Once again, an attempt to explore the psychological aspects of the problem may prove to be useful.

Untouchability was not a problem restricted to the field of religion alone. The secular aspect of it is clear and simple. Untouchables had been confined to the lower socio-economic status in the social system. It was necessary to remedy this situation as much as it was necessary to enhance their 'ritual' status, i.e. the position ascribed to the untouchables by the system of religious beliefs and social

customs. Religious customs die hard. As sociologist Summer (1906) puts it, stateways cannot change folkways. In other words, it is difficult to change folkways and traditions by the use of political force. Also, no amount of change in religious beliefs could iradicate the worldly problems of poverty, disease and starvation. It was impossible for Dr Ambedkar to devote equal time to the worldly and the other-worldly problems. Further, attention to the religious problem would have diverted his people's attention and energies away from the immediate and pressing economic problems. Dr Ambedkar realized that there were two basic tools available for advancing worldly goals, namely, the right to political power and the right to education. He taught his men systematically to use both these things. For one thing, he urged them to be alert and watchful about the law-making process and showed them how to control it by organized voting. Second, he urged them to take earnestly to education and demonstrated through his own example that an untouchable can indeed achieve better occupational and economic status through education.

Attendant on both these aspects, political, and educational, was an unavoidable psychological aspect. Untouchability, on top of being a religious and economic problem, etc., is a state of the mind. It is a state of helplessness and dependency. Acceptance of the status of a slave in a fatalistic way is worse than being enslaved. Dr Ambedkar realized this and decided that his first task was to remove the psychological barrier. He castigated the untouchables for accepting slavery. It seems reasonable to say that if the revolt is justifiable, so must be the feeling of hatred toward the oppressor, and that it is necessary for a person to see that a change of status is possible before he can strive and fight for it. Dr Ambedkar spoke to and worked with his followers, first to prepare them psychologically to fight for their political rights and work hard to attain higher education. Then, he led them in an organized manner into the fields of politics, labour unions, and education. This type of work occupied the middle and later years of his life, namely, the years from about thirty to sixty-five.

While being busy with these worldly affairs he remained in close touch with ideas regarding other-worldly affairs. Although casual reference to the plans for conversion arose once in a while, he kept silently working on his religious ideas. It appears that Dr Ambedkar's studies in sociology, anthropology and economics in his youth, led him to strong convictions regarding the nature of the problem of

untouchability and also about ways and means to solve it. His social identity as a leader of untouchables was formed and already matured by the time he ended his second sojourn abroad. Indeed the strength of a person's identity is indicated by the degree to which he can resist change attempted through persuasion, pressure or coercion. The strength of Dr Ambedkar's identity was tested and proved in his encounter with Mahatma Gandhi.

As suggested by psychologist Erik Erikson (1956, p. 113) identity and ideology are two aspects of the same process. The social identity of a person is largely defined by the ideology he adopts, his social position in terms of friendship and enmity are defined by the stand he takes on various issues. The sense of self and social identity grows in the context of his experience in life and is revisable from time to time throughout the life-cycle. While certain aspects of a person's identity may be well-formed at a given stage of life, other aspects may be slower in their growth. In the case of Dr Ambedkar it seems that several aspects of his identity, such as his self-definition in terms of the leadership role, for example, matured in early adulthood. Regarding the aspect of religious ideology, however, he had not developed at an early stage in his adult life. As noted earlier, he adopted a strategy of devoting his time first to the secular aspects of the problem while postponing the religious issue to a later period. He could have rejected religion altogether, but he did not. It is difficult to understand why he did not. One may speculate that he was deeply influenced by the kind of religious devotion which his father practised or that his people practised. A philosophy of life or an ideology, whether religious or secular, is an organization of beliefs regarding what is considered 'good'. Dr Ambedkar's choice of ideology was based on a very broad and deep study of comparative religion and it took him a long time before choosing, or, rather developing an ideology of his kind.

Psychologist Erik Erikson has suggested that there are eight stages of the human life-cycle. The fifth stage corresponds to late adolescence and early adulthood, when a person forms a psycho-social identity. We have seen earlier how Dr Ambedkar formed his identity by benefiting from his prolonged 'psychosocial moratorium'. It is not necessary to go into the details of all the eight stages of man proposed by Erikson. Reference to two other stages may, however, be useful here. In Erikson's view, the last two stages corresponding to late adulthood and old age are characterized by the development of a

sense of generativity and a sense of integrity respectively. These two stages can help us understand why a person like Dr Ambedkar turned to religion in his old age. The concept of the penultimate stage of generativity is based on the general observation that the chief concern of late adulthood for most men, is to take care of, and provide for, the next generation. Dhananjay Keer, in his biography of Dr Ambedkar, has described how deeply Dr Ambedkar was concerned about his son Yashwant, and how he tried to help him, through his friends, in starting a business, etc. As a leader of the untouchables, however, Dr Ambedkar was concerned with the paternal duty of providing care for his followers as well. It is well known to many that one of the chief reasons why Dr Ambedkar took on the role of a maker of the Constitution was his desire to be assured that the rights and privileges of the Depressed Classes were protected by the Constitution of free India (Keer, p. 415). Indeed not only his surviving followers but the whole of the Indian nation should be grateful to Dr Ambedkar for providing a sound constitutional structure that has successfully survived a generation, when the Constitutions of several other nations have collapsed one after another. Soon after the Constitution was adopted, he introduced the Hindu Code Bill which was to govern future generations in matters of marriage, divorce, property, etc., he intended this to be applicable to the Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and also to his followers who were soon to be converted to Buddhism. The Parliament, however, did not accept the Bill at that time. At any rate, the sense of duty and fervour with which Dr Ambedkar worked for such lasting legal matters can at least be partly related to the sense of generativity (care for future generations) characteristics of late adulthood. His move toward conversion may also be similarly related to some psychological state for the following reason: an acquaintance of the writer once remarked that Dr Ambedkar told him that one of the chief reasons why he wanted to convert his followers to Buddhism was because he did not want them to be the 'cannon fodder' for the Communists after his death. It has not been possible for the writer yet to authenticate this as a historical fact through supporting evidence. However, it is indeed a fact that Dr Ambedkar said something to that effect, then it clearly shows that the conversion movement was motivated by his concern for the care of his survivors.

Erikson's concept of the final stage of life implies that a person in this phase tried to avoid a sense of despair and seeks a sense of

integrity. That is, he tries to consolidate the fruits of earlier life into a sense of being, beyond the narrow confines of his particular life-cycle and he tries to develop 'a sense of comradeship with men and women of distant times and different pursuits', Erikson has also suggested that towards the end of one's life a man may face 'a new edition of an identity crisis which we may state in the words "I am what survives of me" ' (Erikson, 1968, pp. 139-41). That Ambedkar consolidated and propagated on ideological perspective in the last phase of his life makes sense as a new edition of his identity crisis in this manner. While his first, early adult identity was Dr Ambedkar as a leader and chief spokesman of the untouchables, his terminal identity was Dr Ambedkar as the proponent of Buddhism, one which has survived him.

The conversions raise a few other questions which must be looked into at this point. First, why did he choose Buddhism from among all the ideological perspectives or religions available? Second, did he indeed choose the philosophy of the original form of Buddhism? Third, why did he regard religious conversion to be a safeguard in the interest of his followers? Attempts will be made in what follows to answer these questions and to see what psychological sense the conversions make.

Social psychologist Milton Rokeach has recently suggested that there are two principal values—freedom and equality—relatively high or low emphasis on which accounts for the differences in the major political ideologies of our times. Thus, he suggests, low emphasis on both these values characterizes fascism; high emphasis on freedom and low on equality is the characteristic of capitalism; socialism has equally high emphasis on both equality and freedom; and communism emphasizes equality highly, but rates freedom low. Although these schemes are rather simplistic when compared to the enormous complexities of divergent ideologies, the basic idea is applicable to the question under consideration. Liberty (i.e. freedom) and equality were the first two principles of Dr Ambedkar's philosophy of life, as noted earlier. His strong emphasis on equality is easy to understand since he was a victim of a social system based on inequality of social status and opportunity. The longing among his followers for a system of equality could easily make them responsive to the loud cry of the Communists for social and economic equality. But, Dr Ambedkar as an intellectual, brought up under the influence of oriental as well as Western traditions of freedom of thought and

expression, could hardly tolerate a regimentation of thought characteristic of a totalitarian ideology. He, therefore, rejected Communism and was afraid of his followers falling prey to great Communist appeals for equality. An equally strong emphasis on equality and freedom would result in some kind of socialism according to Rokeach's scheme. Dhananjay Keer has pointed out that Dr Ambedkar was a believer in what is called State-Socialism and that he disliked dogmatic Marxism (Keer, p. 389). One may speculate that his belief in Socialism may be partly attributed to his training at Professor Harold Laski's London School of Economics. However, his creed cannot be described simply as a type of Socialism. In addition to equality and freedom he believed in the principle of fraternity, and that too, of a religious kind. Moreover, in the final stage of his life, he modified his philosophy into what he called Buddhism. He believed that there were three principles at the basis of Buddhism, *prajna* (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love) and *samata* (equality) (Keer, p. 487). The parallelism between these three and the earlier three principles of his philosophy is not difficult to understand.

A statement of the philosophy of Buddhism in Dr Ambedkar's words has been given in his book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*. This statement could be criticized as being different from the original form of Buddhism and perhaps, rightly so. Experts on Buddhism could tell us what and how much is the difference between Buddhism as expounded in its original texts and in Dr Ambedkar's statement of the same. Although most philosophies are based on so-called eternal principles, these principles need interpretations that are applicable to specific situations in changing times. Thus Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism and Marxism have all been reinterpreted time and again. Several interpretations of the same philosophy differed from one part of the world to another and from one person to another. It is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate the relative merits of these philosophies. Rather, the specific purpose here is to point out that a scientific study of ideologies is essentially non-evaluative. Students of ideologies note that the perception of truth and goodness is relative to cultural, historical and psychological difference. Thus, the Hinayana, Mahayana and Zen types of Buddhism, as well as Ambedkar's type of Buddhism, are different because the interpretations were made at different times and places. During the lifetime of Dr Ambedkar, Tilak, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, and Vinobha

Bhave have all given *different* interpretations of the *Gita*. Indeed, several persons, like Ambedkar, rejected the *Gita* completely as a useless document. These differences of opinion would make sense if we take psychological relativity into account. In other words, the views of these people differed because the nature of the experience of life was different in the case of each one of them. In the case of Dr Ambedkar, his place in the social hierarchy was obviously a chief determinant of his views. As has been suggested in the foregoing discussion, a developmental view helps us understand how his own views changed from one stage of life to another with his changing experience.

Religious conversion is a psychological phenomenon. Before the turn of the century, psychologist E.D. Starbuck studied religious conversion and observed it to be a typically adolescent phenomenon. Another noted psychologist, William James, in his well-known book entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experience* described religious conversion as a spontaneous phenomenon arising out of a present incompleteness and wrongness. He said that during a religious conversion a group of ideas to which a person devotes himself or in other words, 'the habitual centre of his personal energy' changes from one point to another (James, 1902, Chapters 9 and 10). During the decades since William James wrote his book, psychologists have not shown much interest in the study of religious conversion as a psychological phenomenon. From the earlier available descriptions, conversion seems to be a rather sudden and spontaneous change that comes after a long period of 'subconscious incubation' of ideas. Dr Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism does not conform to such a description. His conversion seems to be neither an unconscious nor a sudden process. Also, his was not a run-of-the-mill type of conversion brought about by a proselytising missionary. Moreover, it is unlike most other conversions which are an individual affair. It cannot be considered to be comparable in terms of the underlying psychological mechanisms leading to the conversion of an individual, whether the conversion is brought about through a spontaneous change of heart, or through friendly persuasion, or through being a victim of calculated propaganda. Ambedkar and his followers were converted *en masse* in their hundreds of thousands in the first instance, and by the hundreds on some later occasions. Dhananjay Keer reports a comment made by Bishop Bardley of the Methodist Episcopal Church when he heard about Dr Ambedkar's decision in 1935 to have conversions *en*

masse. The Bishop said that he could not see how great communities involving millions could become Christians suddenly without feeling a real change of heart. (Leaders of several other sects and religions, however, found no difficulty in opening their gates wide open to welcome the crowds.) It must be suggested in this context that the conversion of Ambedkar and his followers is a rather unique phenomenon that has a curious combination of some characteristics of both an individual religious conversion and a social movement.

A religious conversion can be said to be a very large scale change amounting to an almost total change in a person's social identity. This is because the religious ideas which once formed the core of a person's basic beliefs, values and attitudes and which formed the basic principles accounting for the unity, continuity and essential sameness of his personality ('James' Habitual Centre of Personal Energy') are now replaced by a new set of ideas. In other words, a conversion is the change of the social identity of a person. Not only do the ideas in which the person is the most ego-involved (i.e. feels associated with, very personally and intimately) change during conversion, but also his place in society in terms of his friends and enemies. Persons actively involved in this original religion may now take him to be a stranger; those from the religion he now embraces, embrace him as a great friend. In certain cases of conversion the social aspect may be more dominant than the spiritual, experiential side. Bishop Bradley's doubts regarding the desirability of mass conversions seem to have arisen basically from the view that, while in single individual cases, the spiritual aspect is likely to be dominant, in mass conversions this could hardly be so. Indeed the social aspect, namely, the interpersonal and group context, was very strong, particularly in the case of the conversions of Dr Ambedkar's followers. It may be noted that in the oaths taken as part of the ritual of conversion, there was a great accent on saying that 'I will no longer worship Hindu deities like Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh', etc. Thus, the emphasis was more on saying that 'We will no longer belong to the Hindu community' than on saying 'I deeply love the principles of Buddhism.'

It is the defection of a large group of people from one community to form part of, or to make an alliance with another community which makes conversions a social movement. Mass conversions may be said to involve a change in group identity. Groups, as well as individual persons require an ideology to serve as a symbolic basis for

the principle that accounts for unity, coherence, continuity and self-sameness in each case. Minor changes in the peripheral aspects of the beliefs and values of an individual or a group do not matter very much, but a change in the core ideas can amount to an almost *total change*. Thus, in the case of an institution or a country, the changes in statutory laws or by-laws are made continually, and these do not constitute a very significant change in the structure of the group. However, when an institution or a nation changes its entire constitution, it may amount to an almost total change of *group identity*. A good example of change of group, or national identity may be China before and after the Communist revolution. Such a revolution may be likened to the religious conversion of an individual. Both political revolution and conversion (of the type William James described) have parallels in terms of a long preceding period of feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction, a sudden upheaval of emotional activity, storm, stress and disorganization, a return to a state of relative quiet and relatively stable and satisfying organizations and an attendant change in intergroup relations. The analogy cannot, of course, be stretched beyond a point.

Dr Ambedkar's conversion movement does not have the convulsive character of both a classical (James-type) conversion or a political revolution. When Dr Ambedkar started his work, the position of the untouchables was bad enough to warrant a revolution. In a way, it took a long time to awaken and convince the downtrodden masses that they were indeed enslaved. The credit goes to Dr Ambedkar, and people like him, who did the awakening. Again, credit must be given to the tremendous influence of the leadership provided by Dr Ambedkar in bringing about a well-planned gradual, and quiet change in his people.

One of Dr Ambedkar's major objectives was to abolish untouchability. He was successful in achieving this in his lifetime to the extent that the constitution he proposed abolished untouchability *de jure* if not *de facto*. Believing that untouchability would soon be removed, several people had already started to refer to the untouchables as ex-untouchables. However, the ex-untouchable was as uncomfortable as his predecessor without the prefix. Mahatma Gandhi realized this and proposed and popularized the label Harijan. This is indeed prescient, so far as change in name is often indicative of a changed identity adopted through conversion. Most religions, for example, insist on changing the name of the convert probably to ensure and

seal the changed status. But identity as Harijans was ascribed and not achieved, just as much as the caste status was ascribed. To be a Harijan was still not a positive, dynamic and satisfying feeling. The intended change would not therefore, be complete till the 'ex-untouchables' achieved, or voluntarily adopted, a more dynamic, positive, and satisfying identity. An alternative was a complete merger and amalgamation into the broader Hindu society. But the custom of non-intermarriage as proved to be die-hard and as made the merger of any caste/community almost impossible. It seems that Dr Ambedkar probably meant a move toward a possible merger with the Hindu community at least on a legal basis, when he proposed the Hindu Code Bill which was to be commonly applicable to caste Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, and even Buddhists. Dr Ambedkar introduced the Bill in 1951, soon after the Constitution was adopted. But unfortunately the Bill was not accepted then, and a great attempt to bring these religious sects to a common understanding failed.

Although the constitution declared the practice of untouchability illegal, the task of uplifting the untouchables was unfinished. Dr Ambedkar's efforts in urging his followers to acquire higher education had started off many of them on their way to improving their material or secular status. The community has become politically conscious and organized. Yet a great deal of progress has still to be made. Dr Ambedkar, now approaching old age, must have seen that the task he had undertaken would take a much longer time than he had. He must have, therefore thought of ways to ensure longer continuity and organization of the community. A religious ideology would provide the basis for such continuity and organization, and safeguard the interests of the community. Now, looking back fifteen years after the conversions, it seems that such continuity and organization have been attained to a great extent.

While retrospecting, it is inevitable that people evaluate the life history of past leaders in the context of the ongoing processes of history. Jurists might evaluate the work of Dr Ambedkar as a jurist, educationists, social reformers, constitutional experts, religionists, politicians, all would evaluate him and the aspects of his work in line with their own interests and expertise. It would not be out of place here to look into the psychological aspects of his work.

From a socio-psychological point of view, what needs to be done to help the members of a disprivileged community is to counter their feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and nobodyness. In other

words, to create or restore a sense of confidence, self-respect and self-esteem is a sign of strength and health, while a sense of self-hate and nobodyness is characteristics of weakness and pathological disturbance. A paper on the socio-psychological views of Dr Ambedkar's life history may, therefore, be concluded with some psychological observations about some of his followers.

A few years ago, the writer attempted to measure the social attitudes of a sample of college students in Poona who belonged to Brahmin, Maratha and the 'Scheduled' Castes. The sample contained 90 Mahars, most of whom were converted to Buddhism in their childhood. The study was conducted in 1964-5 and most students were in the range of 16-22 years at that time. The students rated their attitudes towards various castes, sub-castes and religions on a set of bipolar dimensions like good-bad, valuable-worthless, love-hate, friend-enemy, holy-unholy, superior-inferior, etc. An interesting contrast in the evaluations made by Brahmins, Marathas and SCs was observed. The Brahmins rated their own caste most favourably on almost every one of the above dimensions. The SCs on the average, rated their own caste least favourable on each dimension, and the Maratha evaluation was in-between. It was also observed that the evaluation of Chambhars, SCs and Hindus made by the Chambhar students was the least favourable compared to the evaluation of own sub-caste, caste and religion of the members of every other sub-caste. The Mahars, however, rated the Buddhist community very favourably on dimensions of good, valuable, pleasant, holy, high status, superior, etc., and the degree of favourableness of these ratings was almost as high as that of the Brahmin evaluations of their own sub-caste. What these attitude ratings suggest is that the Mahar youths, as Buddhists, rate themselves more favourably than they rate SCs in terms of being good, valuable, pleasant, holy and on the dimensions of status and 'superiority'. This suggests that through conversions the 'ex-untouchables' have not only acquired a high evaluation of themselves, but have raised themselves in the esteem of others (although the Buddhists are slightly less favourably rated than SCs on dimensions of love, friendliness and on the life of helpfulness). A majority of SCs chose Dr Ambedkar as their ideal. It is the impression of the writer from observations made in the context of his study of college students that the Buddhist students, deriving inspiration from their ideal, Dr Ambedkar, are very strongly motivated in pursuing higher studies.

The observations made earlier are admittedly based on a small sample of a selective population, and therefore, may not be generalizable to the large number of Dr Ambedkar's followers. However, to the extent to which these are symptomatic, they indicate very positive and healthy fruits for his followers.

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2

Indian Society and Dr Ambedkar's Idea of Equality

S.K. Gupta

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the concept of equality and egalitarianism, like other Western ideas was selectively absorbed by the Indian intelligentsia. Some preferred to focus on the structural dimensions of inequalities, whereas others framed their ideas in line with the 'anti-colonial constructs'. What has further added to the problem of specifying rational or relevant grounds for differential treatment is that the idea of equality is complex. It is value-laden and contextual. The oppressive inequalities, howsoever fundamentally alike in their core constituents or intent and purpose, have differed widely in their societal forms. In India too these have their own peculiar setting and format.

The present paper focuses on Ambedkar's perception of the Indian society and his idea of equality as one can garner from some of his writings, in particular, those which provide his critique of the Hindu social order. For purposes of convenience and clarity, the paper is divided into three parts. Besides referring to his early life and bitter and unpalatable experiences, the first part discusses the wide variety of influences that moulded his thinking, ideas and vision. The second part focuses on his critical appraisal of the Hindu socio-religious system, whereas the third discusses his concept of equality and the counter-hegemonic discourse by which the great egalitarian thinker sought to create a just society.

II

Ambedkar, a versatile genius, was an erudite scholar, an impassioned advocate of the downtrodden, and a national leader of great foresight and towering stature. He struggled to transform an apolitical,

ostracized and indigent mass into a crucial factor in the political power structure.[1] He was born in the family of an army personnel of moderate means. He did not appear on the Indian political scene all of a sudden. He had to pass through a rigorous caste-ridden social set-up, which breathed contempt for the Dalits. It kept them at its lowest rung through subtle strands of inequalitarian thought which had evolved over centuries and acquired a metaphysical, philosophical and religious ring.[2]

Babasaheb Ambedkar's childhood and early youth were full of bitter and unpalatable experiences. None the less, he blossomed because of the care and kindness shown to him by some philanthropic personalities such as 'Ambedkar', K.A. Keluskar, S.K. Bole, the Arya Samajist Pandit Atma Ram,[3] Shambaji Waghmare, Naval Bathena, Maharaja Sayajirao of Baroda, and Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur. They appeared as a 'silver lining' on Bhima's otherwise obscure world. Some of them also provided the wherewithal (for his education and training). Impressed by his intelligence, self-determination and dedication, they assisted and encouraged Bhimrao in his efforts and achievements. Thus, they paved the way for his rise to higher and higher echelons.

The West, too played, a significant role in shaping the personality of Ambedkar. It was in America and England that he dived deep into knowledge, both Western and Indian, which added a new dimension to his personality and gave him a new vision. Under the stimulating influence of John Dewey, Charles Beard, Edwin R.A. Seligman, Edwin Cannan and a host of others, he studied ancient and modern history, anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics and law. Of all the professors, Dewey and Seligman influenced him most. He took down every word that John Dewey uttered and could reproduce his lectures verbatim. Keer says, 'Ambedkar took to Seligman as a duck takes to water and ran after the Professor from class to class with special permission to attend his classes.'[4] Apart from these academics, he was also inspired by the life and mission of Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute which 'disseminated among the Negroes the doctrine of education of head, heart and hand, and thus broke the shackles of bondage which had crushed the Negroes for ages physically, mentally and spiritually'.[5]

Whereas the West gave Ambedkar his 'weapon', the Indian masters gave him his soul force. The first important figure to leave an indelible mark on his life and thought was his beloved father,

Subedar Ramji Maloji Sakpal. He was a teacher in the educational core of the army and infused in his son an iron-will to resist worldly temptations, a rare and irresistible zeal for learning, and a keen sense of discipline, industry and social responsibility. His other sources of inspiration were Gautama Buddha, Kabir and Jotirao Phule. They were regarded by Ambedkar as his three masters or gurus. Ambedkar became conversant with the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha at an impressionable age. In 1907, a book on Lord Buddha was gifted to him by K.A. Keluskar. Lord Buddha influenced him so much that Buddhism became the touchstone of his analysis of Hinduism. It was from the *Tripitaka* Ambedkar learnt that: nothing is infallible; nothing is binding forever; everything is subject to enquiry and examination; religion must relate itself to life; all human beings are equal; and worth not birth is the measure of man. The challenge thrown by Buddhism to certain Brahmanical notions such as the 'theory of past karma' or its use to explain away the caste system, the Vedic dogma of divine creation of the social order, and the efficacy of the rites, ceremonies and sacrifices as means of obtaining salvation, appealed significantly to Ambedkar.[6] Buddhism became for him *prajna* (true knowledge), *maitri*, *sila* and *karuna* (love), and *samanta* (equality). To be precise, it became the basis of his philosophy of universal love, human brotherhood and equality. Finally, Buddhism gave him all that he could take from Marxism. In short, it was *moksha* to him. The love for Kabir, Ambedkar partly inherited from his family, who subscribed to the Kabir-cult, and partly, it was the result of the unequivocal denunciation of caste by Kabir. A few hours before his death, Ambedkar remembered Kabir and sang a song: '*Chal Kabira tera bhav sagar dera.*' Ambedkar's fascination for Mahatma Jotirba Phule too was rooted in the frontal attack that the latter had launched in the nineteenth century against the Hindu social order. Phule was not only a precursor of Ambedkar in many respects but he was also one of India's greatest social reformers, a lover of the education of the untouchables and girls, and a crusader against Brahminism, priestcraft and casteism.[7] In a way, casteism is more dangerous than communalism. Caste is decaying but casteism would live both under the cloak of 'merit' and in the form of a vested interest, which certain deprived sections have developed in their 'deprivation' or 'backwardness'. Ambedkar had so much respect for Phule that he wished to write his biography,[8] and dedicated one of his works: *Who Were the Shudras?* to the memory of Jotirba and described him as: 'The Greatest Shudra of

Modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery of the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India the social democracy' was more vital than independence from foreign rule."[9]

All these influences got well-knit in Ambedkar's personality and became an integral part of his perspective, his consciousness, his plan of action, his political programme and his scheme of constitutional reforms and egalitarian social reconstruction. However, to visualize their impact in any tangible form, one would have to examine his critique of the Hindu socio-religious system, as also the equalitarian alternative for which he launched a lifelong struggle.

III

Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism was neither scholastic nor sophomoric. It was based on a serious study of the Hindu religious literature. He also drew on his sociological and anthropological knowledge and a comparative perspective of other social orders. Undoubtedly, Ambedkar was also influenced by his bitter personal experiences, and by the pitiable plight of the Dalits. He, therefore, often wrote with a caustic pen. Yet Ambedkar's analysis of Hindu philosophy was intended 'as a definite approach to the strengthening of the Hindu society on the basis of the human values of equality, liberty and fraternity'.[10]

Ambedkar was very clear in his mind that religion as a social force cannot be ignored. In one of his works, he stated that Herbert Spencer has rightly defined religion as the 'weft which everywhere crosses the warp of history'. This is true of every society. But religion has not only 'crossed everywhere the warp of Indian history, it forms the warp and woof of the Hindu mind."[11] Ambedkar further contends that philosophy of religion is a science, both descriptive and normative. It has three dimensions. The first revolves round the definition of religion itself. There is not one definition of religion but many, and therefore, arguments instead of getting focused are often directed at cross purposes. Ambedkar regarded religion as theology and distinguished between its mythical, civil, natural and revelational forms; the last two being close to each other. He said, 'that a genuine natural theology and a genuine revelational theology might stand in contradiction may be safely excluded as not being possible'.[12] The

natural theology as it has been traditionally understood, propounds three theses: (a) 'God exists and is the author of what we call nature or universe'; (b) He 'controls all the events which make nature', and (c) He 'exercises a government over mankind in accordance with His sovereign moral law.'[13]

The second dimension of the philosophy of religion relates to the knowledge of the ideal scheme for which a religion stands. It defines the fixed, permanent and dominant part in the religion of any society. To separate the chaff from the grain is always difficult. In the case of religion the difficulty is greater because of the fact that its traditional usages grew only gradually over centuries. They reflected habits of thought during man's intellectual and moral development. In other words, religion grew from stage to stage, from the simplist childish prayers to the highest metaphysical abstractions.[14] Quoting Max Mueller, Ambedkar said that 'In the majority of the hymns of *Veda* we might recognize the childhood; in the Brahmanas and their sacrificial, domestic and moral ordinances the busy manhood; in the Upanishads the old age of the Vedic religion.'[15] As regards the Hindu scheme of divine governance, it is enshrined in the *Manusmriti*, a divine code which laid down the rules which governed the religion, ritualistic and social life of the Hindus in minute detail and which must be regarded as 'the Bible of the Hindus and containing the philosophy of Hinduism'.[16]

The third dimension of philosophy of religion focused on the criterion to be adopted for judging the value of the ideal scheme of divine governance, for which a given religion stands. Religion must be put on trial, but by what criterion should it be judged? The answer required the definition of the norm.[17]

Ambedkar contended that of the three dimensions, the third one was the most difficult one to be ascertained and defined. While evolving his own parameters, he laid emphasis on the study of revolutions which different religions had undergone. These revolutions pertained to the relation between God and man, society and man, and man and man. He divided these revolutions into two categories: external and internal. External revolution denoted the revolt of science against the extra-territorial jurisdiction assumed by religion over a field which did not belong to it. Internal revolution was considered a true revolution. It might be compared to any other political revolution such as the French Revolution or the Russian Revolution. It involved a constitutional change and led to an

alteration and reconstitution of the scheme of divine governance.[18]

Again Ambedkar distinguished between (i) savage and civilized societies; and (ii) antique and modern societies, and reckoned the march from the one to the other as two different stages in the internal revolution. He said that in both the savage and civilized societies, the central interest of religion was 'in the life processes by which individuals are preserved and the race maintained'. However, the two societies differed in two important respects. In the religion of the savage societies, there was no trace of the idea of God, and morality was independent of religion. Ambedkar linked the origin of the idea of God with the worship of the Great Man in society, the Hero—giving rise to Theism. The idea of God might also have emerged from purely philosophical speculations about who created life—giving rise to Deism—with its belief in God as the architect of the universe. In any case, the idea of God was not integral to religion. Though it was difficult to say when and how the idea of God had got fused into religion, God did become part of the scheme of religion in civilized society. Morality too became sanctified by religion. The second stage was marked by a radical change. Instead of society, the individual became the end. Instead of utility, justice became the criterion for judging right or wrong. It was a revolution at the level of norms.[19]

Ambedkar, however, applied the test of 'justice' as well as of 'utility' to judge the philosophy of Hinduism. He regarded the principle of justice as compendious; it included most of the other principles which have become the foundation of a moral order. 'Justice has always evoked ideas of equality, of proportion of "compensation". Equity signifies equality. . . . If all men are equal, then they are of the same essence and their common essence entitles them to the same fundamental rights and to equal liberty.'[20] In a nutshell, justice was simply another name for liberty, equality and fraternity, according to Ambedkar.

Ambedkar lamented that Hinduism was wanting in these tenets as the Hindu social organization was based on caste system. *Varna* was the parent of castè and both upheld the principle of gradation and rank, in other words, of inequality. He pointed out that this 'inequality in status is not merely the inequality that one sees in the warrant of precedence prescribed for a ceremonial gathering at a King's Court. It is a permanent social relationship among the classes to be observed to be enforced—at all times in all places and for all

purposes.'[21] In order to further elaborate the absence of equality and liberty in the Hindu social system, he referred to the rules evolved with regard to slavery, marriage, Rule of Law, occupation and education. Alluding to Manu, Narada and Yajnavalkya, he stated that slavery was recognized by Hinduism. Manu recognized seven kinds of slaves, whereas Narada has put the number at fifteen. Recognition of slavery was bad in itself. What, however, made it most oppressive and inequalitarian was that the praxis of slavery in its inverse order to *varna* was not recognized by Manu and his successors. The same kind of asymmetry was operative with regard to inter-marriages, if at all such marriages were allowed to take place. Rule of Law also did not mean equality before law. Instead, inequality was writ large in the Hindu criminal jurisprudence. Its guiding principle was discrimination based on *varna*. Punishment did not have so significant a corelation with the gravity of the offence as with the *varna* of the offender. The higher the caste, the less rigorous was the punishment.[22] In other words, social and religious inequality was embedded in the philosophy of Hinduism. It upheld privileges and caste-based immunities.

All this, coupled with lack of economic independence and denial to access to knowledge, created an environment where liberty was conspicuous by its absence. Whatever liberty did exist, its praxis domain did not go beyond the contours well demarcated for each ascriptive group. Elaborating the case Shudras *vis-a-vis* the Savarnas, Ambedkar says that the rules not only put an interdict on the economic independence of a Shudra but also enjoined that he must serve others. Caste system was not a division of labour only but also a division of labourers. Manu's law of wages was not the minimum wage law. It was the maximum wage law. It was also an iron law fixed so low that there was no fear of Shudra accumulating wealth and obtaining economic security.[23]

The position with regard to access to education was still worse. Ambedkar asserted that the ancient world might have been guilty of refusing to shoulder the responsibility of education of the masses. But there has never been a society guilty of closing to generality of its people the study of the books of its religion. Nor has any society been guilty of prohibiting the mass of its people from acquiring knowledge. Nor has any society declared that any attempt made by the common man to acquire knowledge would be punishable as a crime. This was only the case with the Hindu society, where education came to be primarily restricted to the Brahmins. They,

being inalienably vested with the authority of learning, teaching and interpreting the shastras, became the repository of knowledge. No wonder many distortions crept into Hinduism. Even the other *dvija* castes were marginalized in the field of education. In their case, education was mainly domestic; it was practical. It only increased the skill to do a particular thing. It did not 'lead to new perception. It did not widen horizon, with the result that the practical education taught him only an isolated and uniform way of acting so that in changing environment the skill turned out to be gross ineptitude. Illiteracy became an integral part of Hinduism by a process which is indirect but integral of Hinduism.'[24]

Fraternity, which is another name for fellow-feeling, was also chained within the caste contours and religiously ordained rules regarding the performance of religious rites and ceremonies. Ambedkar pointed out that religion as a basis of rules of precedence 'manifests itself in three ways. Firstly, through religious ceremonies, secondly through incantations that accompany the religious ceremonies and thirdly, through the position of the priest.'[25] Some castes were allowed to perform certain ceremonies, whereas others were prohibited. For instance, *upanayana* could be performed only by people belonging to upper three *varnas.* Precedence followed from this distinction; a caste which could perform all the ceremonies was higher in status than the caste which had a right to perform only a few. Turning to mantras, these were another source for rules of precedence. According to Hindu religion, the same ceremony could be performed in two different ways: (i) Vedokta and (ii) Puranokta. A caste entitled to use Vedokta form was superior to that which was entitled to use only Puranokta form.[26]

Not only this, Hinduism required the instrumentality of a priest to ensure full benefits from the performance of a religious ceremony. As per scriptures, the priest invariably had to be a Brahmin. A Brahmin, therefore, was indispensable. What Ambedkar, however, questioned the most was that the scriptures did not anywhere specify that a Brahmin would accept the invitation of each and every Hindu irrespective of his caste to officiate at a religious ceremony. Over the centuries, it had already been well settled at the invitation of which caste Brahmin would officiate and at which caste he would not. This fact too became the basis of precedence as between castes.[27]

Another source for rules of precedence was commensality, viz., inter-mixing, inter-dining, and inter-marriage. The rules in the case

of inter-marriages were quite strict, whereas in the case of food these were somewhat relaxed but none the less rooted in the rules of precedence. One might take 'kacha' food from a caste above but should not accept food from those below. In the case of inter-marriages, the principle of endogamy, considered to be the essence of the caste system by Ambedkar, reigned supreme. Undoubtedly, these conditions of commensality did create inferiority and superiority complexes in the Hindu society, but what added the most obnoxious and oppressive dimension to it was the purity-pollution syndrome. It was this very syndrome which categorized the Dalits into untouchables, unapproachables, unshadowables, or even unseeables.

Obviously, the preceding discussion indicates that Ambedkar's appraisal of Hindu social order not only highlighted its inequalitarian strands but also the nodal points from which these had originated. He had a very sharp and analytical mind, and he made the best use of the works he read during the course of his academic pursuits in India and abroad for the amelioration, upliftment and service of the Dalits. Ambedkar questioned each and every kind of theorization which denigrated or ostracized the Depressed Classes, or heaped contempt or humiliation on them. He also endeavoured to discover alternative theories from within his rich and vast knowledge and the realm of his analytical acumen. *Who Were the Shudras?*; *The Untouchables*; *Caste in India*; *Annihilation of Caste*; and his unpublished writings, now printed by the Maharashtra Government, such as *Riddles in Hinduism*, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India*, *Buddha or Karl Marx*, *Untouchables or the Children of India's Ghetto* and *Other Essays on Untouchables* and *Untouchability*, etc.—all were written to subserve the same end. His theoretical exercises were, in fact, exercises in the domain of praxis.

IV

The discussion in the preceding section might sound to many a digression unless one appreciates that Ambedkar's idea of equality was deeply embedded in his critical appraisal of the Hindu social order. He did not write any separate treatise on equality. Nor was he a theoretician or philosopher in the formal/conventional sense of the term. His egalitarian ideas are not systematically enumerated in any of his works. These are spread out as 'jewels of thought' in his various

writings and speeches, and the best of them can be gathered from his works which focus on the genesis and mechanism of exploitation of the Dalits. Some of these works as mentioned in section II, are of the nature of a critique of the Hindu social order, in particular, of its inequalitarian moorings, whereas the others centre around purely economic problems and the constitutional machinery he sought to create. The latter category also includes his memoranda submitted to the British Government, the speeches he delivered in different fora, and some of the scholarly works or theses he wrote during the course of his academic pursuits abroad. All these reflect his concern for the indigent masses—the 'destitutes' or the Dalits.

Ambedkar was not swayed by the beneficent character of the British. His acute mind could weigh dispassionately the consequences of colonial intervention. In his work: *Administration and Finance of the East India Company*, regarded to be the balance sheet of British India, Ambedkar stated, 'Apparently the immenseness of India's contribution to England is as much astounding as the nothingness of England's contribution to India. Both are, however, true statements if looked at from economic point of view. . . . England has added nothing to the stock of gold and silver in India; on the contrary, she had depleted India—"the sink of the world".[28] England's contribution lay in the uneconomic realm. The British had conferred on the people of India what was the great human blessing—peace. They introduced Western education and brought India in touch with modern institutions and life. Ambedkar, however, posed a big question: 'Whether mere animal peace is to be preferred to economic destitution, let everyone decide for himself.'[29] He knew well that the destitution of the country would affect most the 'destitutes'—the Dalits.

The Dalits are usually blamed for their collaboration with the British Raj. They did indulge in 'collaboration politics' but not to act as wayward speedbreakers on the path towards freedom, instead to protect their genuine interests. Otherwise, as is evident from the preceding para, Ambedkar did criticise the British Raj off-and-on. His denunciation of the Raj, however, became pronounced only when he found that the interests of the Dalits were being sacrificed or these were not being served by the British policies. During the course of his speech in the plenary session of the RTC, he pointed out that the condition of the Dalits had not improved in any significant way under the British Raj. '. . . instead of marching on, we are only marking time. . . . Our wrongs have remained as open

sores and they have not been righted, although 150 years of British rule rolled away.'[30] In a manuscript, which has recently come to light and is published in Volume XII under the title *The Untouchables and the Pax Britannica*, he has discussed as to how the doors of the army were slammed against the Dalits, who helped the British to conquer India and enabled them to retain her during the course of the Great Revolt of 1857.[31] In matters of education too, they have been treated rather discriminately. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century while extending European knowledge to India, the British adopted the downward filtration theory. Sir George Clarke, the Governor of Bombay stated: 'My great predecessor, Mountstuart Elphinstone, felt some reluctance in undertaking the education of these Depressed Classes, not that he thought it undesirable or unnecessary, but because as he wrote in a remarkable minute dated March 1824: "They untouchables are not only the most despised, but among the least numerous of the great divisions of society, and it is to be feared that if our system of education first took root among them, it would never spread further, and that we might find ourselves at the head of a new class superior to the rest in useful knowledge, but hated and despised by the castes to whom their new attainments would always induce us to prefer them".'[32] Not only this, when the British appointed Hunter Commission, there too they discriminated against the Dalits, whereas they accorded special treatment to the Muslims. While criticizing its recommendations, Ambedkar stated that 'it is difficult to understand why the Hunter Commission paid such a scant attention to the educational needs of the Backward Classes. If it felt necessary to be generous towards the Mahomedans, it should have at least seen that it was just to the Backward Classes who were far behind the Mahomedans in education, wealth and social status. Once the Hunter Commission had thrown the Depressed Classes into the background, they remained there and the Government never paid any attention to them.'[33] They continued to be discriminated against in the later policies evolved by the Bombay government in 1913 and 1923.

Ambedkar was equally indignant about the weightage given to the Muslims on the basis of their political importance. What is most significant to note in the present context is that he protested against the 'grading of the citizens of a country on the basis of their political importance. There can be no safe and secure rule except the one that all communities are politically of equal importance. This invidious

distinction is at the root of all communal troubles and is destructive of the principle of equal opportunity.'[34] He warned the British Government against the policy of permitting the political institutions to develop in a replica of the unjust social order of India. This shows that Ambedkar's thinking conformed exactly neither to the British way of settling the claims of different religious and socio-political groups, nor to the viewpoints of the important political parties within the Indian national movement, nor to the major ideological moulds then current in India and abroad.

To put it precisely, Ambedkar's concept of equality was neither in line with the approach of such Congress leaders who emphasized political advancement to the neglect of issues of socio-religious equality, nor was it rooted in Fabian, nor Marxist nor Commintern, nor socialist, nor Gandhian ideological moorings or shibboleths. It hinged on those remedial measures which he thought were *sine qua non* for social reconstruction and vitalization of the Hindu society as also for the upliftment of the untouchables. As such Ambedkar's idea of quality has a conception and stamp of its own making, though the slogan of equality, liberty and fraternity resounds vocally in every strand of his equalitarian thought. He, in fact, drew copiously on different sources such as the French Revolution, Declaration of Rights of Man, Fourteenth Amendment of American Constitution, Government of Ireland Act, 1920, US Civil Rights Protection Acts of 1866 and 1875, Marxist and Buddhist egalitarian thought. However, he did not subscribe to any particular ideology.

Ambedkar was in disagreement with the Indian National Congress because he regarded most of its leaders as 'political Radicals and social Tories'.[35] He was of the view that 'political reform cannot with impunity take precedence over social reform in the sense of reconstruction of society is a thesis which, I am sure, cannot be controverted'.[36] The political struggles have value and permanence only when they accurately express those conditions which exist in reality within a society.

Ambedkar was also critical of the socialists. In his address prepared for the Jat-Pat Todak Mandal, Lahore, he stated that the socialists of India following their fellow brethren in Europe were applying the economic interpretation of history to the facts of India. No student of human society could accept that economic power was the only kind of power. Religion, social status and property were all sources of power and authority. Of course, one had been predominant at one

stage, whereas the other enjoyed pre-eminence in society at another stage. The fallacy of the socialists primarily lay in supposing that 'because in the present stage European society property as a source of power is predominant, that the same is true of India or that the same was ture of Europe in the past'.[37] He had a firm conviction that unless the socialists tackled social issues or caste-untouchability centred problems, they could not usher India into the assembly of egalitarian states. In the peculiar India set-up, he pointed out, 'turn in any direction you like caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform, unless you kill this monster.'[38] Therefore, to preach that 'political and social reforms are but gigantic illusions and that economic reform by equalization of property must have precedence over any other kind of reform'[39] would be putting the cart before the horse.

Ambedkar did not approve wholly the philosophy of Marx. In his work on Buddha and Karl Marx, he rejected the Marxian philosophy as deficient. Since the period of renaissance, the society had been aiming to lay a new foundation based on equality, liberty and fraternity. The French Revolution was welcomed because of his slogan. It, however, failed to produce equality. The people welcomed the Russian Revolution because it aimed to produce equality. But 'it cannot be too much emphasized that in producing equality, society cannot afford to sacrifice fraternity or liberty. Equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty. It seems that the three can co-exist only if one follows the way of Buddha. Communism can give one but not all.'[40] Commintern had laid down only two means, i.e. violence and dictatorship of the proletariat to establish communism, and both violate the principles of liberty and fraternity. Man could not live by bread alone. He must grow materially as well as spiritually. He advocated state socialism tempered by a democratic base and also state ownership of land and other means of production. But he asserted simultaneously that in 'an ideal society there would be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words, there must be social endosmosis.'[41] He was of the view that so long as the different groups remained isolated, maybe on account of the interplay of purity-pollution syndrome or untouchability, there could not be harmony and social cohesiveness. It was the isolation of the groups that was the chief evil. 'Where the

groups allow of endosmosis they cease to be evil. For endosmosis among the groups makes possible a resocialization of once socialized attitudes.'[42] This is fraternity, which was only another name for democracy. Democracy should not be considered merely a form of government. Democracy in the real sense of the term is and must be regarded as 'a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.'

Gandhi and Ambedkar were close to each other in their concern for the *daridranarayan*, the destitute but differed in their perception and solution of the problem. Gandhi had his own world-view, view of India's tradition and customs and Vedic wisdom, village republics, philosophy of social relations, and his own methods and means, a sense of priority and pace for ushering India into an egalitarian society. Since he had an unflinching faith and lifelong commitment to non-violence, he wanted to bring about social reconstruction in the Hindu society on the lines of least resistance and least social discord. That is why his approach of tackling the problem of Harijans was centred on his theory of 'change of heart' and the 'self-purification' paradigm, whereas Ambedkar followed the 'Mahad Model' or what is called the 'self-respect' model, which emphasized on education, self-help, self-assertion and self-organization. Gandhi distinguished between *varna* and caste. According to him *varnashrama* of the Veda was based on absolute equality of status. 'Arrogation of a superior status by and of the *varna* over another is a denial of the law. There is nothing in the law of *varna* to warrant a belief in untouchability.'[43] He further pointed out that *varna* and *ashrama* were institutions which had nothing to do with castes. The law of *varna* only taught that everyone had to earn his bread by following the ancestral calling. No calling was too low and none too high. All were good, lawful and absolutely equal. So caste and untouchability must go but not the *varna* system. Many, however, regarded Gandhi's philosophical differences between caste and *varna* as too subtle to be grasped by people because over the years for all practical purposes the function of both of them was one and the same. Ambedkar too challenged the stand of Gandhi and called him a hypocrite and conservative. He stated that *varna* was the parent of caste. Moreover, to a social revolutionary like Ambedkar, social change through exegesis could hardly appeal.

For Gandhi, to apply coercion or legislation to bring about a social revolution was a negation of the intended revolution itself. In

contrast, Ambedkar believed primarily in the efficacy of law and legislation, and he struggled to evolve a constitutional mechanism to fashion India of his dreams, where equality, liberty and fraternity would have an unhindered play. In Ambedkar's vision of India, all citizens would be equal before law; they have equal civic rights, equal access to all institutions, conveniences and amenities maintained by or for the public; they possess equal opportunities to settle or reside in any part of India, to hold any public office, or exercise any trade or calling;[44] here all key and basic industries would be owned by the state. The agriculture would also be treated as state industry. The land would be let out to villagers without distinction of caste or creed and in such manner that there would be no landlord, no tenant and no landless labour.[45] Ambedkar asserted that these conditions were necessary to instantiate the equality principle. But to stop the process there, i.e. at political and legal equality without providing for social and economic equality would tantamount to handing one an empty sack. Therefore, he pleaded for special privileges and safeguards for the Dalits or the Scheduled Castes. In short, he demanded equality, which would not only lead to the redressal of the past wrongs but also provide sufficient leverage, may be by way of compensation, or in a bid to ensure their levelling up. The constitution of independent India should not only be a levelling document but it must also have special mechanism to ensure the levelling up the Dalits. As Ambedkar had the courage of conviction and a sense of purpose, he never faltered even under insurmountable difficulties and strong pressures. Nothing could tempt him; nothing could make him compromise or betray the cause of his fellow brethren. He revelled in their service and had made it a mission of his life, and he did succeed in his mission.

NOTES

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31. *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. XII, Bombay, 1993, pp. 83-9.
32. S.K. Gupta, op. cit., p. 147.
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35. B.R. Ambedkar, 'Evidence Before the Southborough Committee on Franchise, 1919', in *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. I, 1979, p. 263.

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37. *Annihilation of Caste with a Reply to Mahatma Gandhi*, Lahore, 1936, p. 57.
38. Ibid., p. 47.
39. Ibid., p. 44.
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3

Economic Ideas of Dr Ambedkar and their Relevance Today

M.M. Goel

Dr Ambedkar was a professional economist. He earned his Ph.D. in Economics from the Columbia University, USA, in 1917. The degree of Doctor of Science (D.Sc.), which the London School of Economics conferred on him in 1921, was again in Economics. As a matter of fact, he was deeply interested in the discipline, for it was an essential thing to understand the problems of his people. Various memoranda and statements that the Dalit Messiah submitted to the Government from time to time are indicative of the fact that he had mastered the subject to a great extent. It is an irony, however, that though some small pieces recording his ideas, views and reflections and some brief notices are found here and there, regrettably there is no full work which can help us get true picture of the thinking of this great man of Economics.

Let me clarify at the outset, the present paper is, however, not an endeavour to supply the desideratum; its scope is very limited, i.e. it simply intends to show that Dr Ambedkar, an expert of both theoretical and applied Economics, gave us a lot which was useful for the society in the good old days, and much of this useful material can be relevantly used by us even today.

II

REFORMATION OF AGRICULTURE

As it is today, agriculture was the chief means of India's economy during the period under study. Obviously, most of our economic problems centred round it. And that explains as to why Ambedkar gave so much space to agriculture in his economic programme.

To begin with, the Dalit Messiah had a hard look at the subject

and ascertained in every possible manner the problems which happened to be there from the point of view of an economist. His main concerns were the nature of landholdings, especially their fragmentation and division into unproductive and economically unviable structures. He attributed it mainly to an enormous pressure of population on land and argued:

> [Thus] the grievance [of small holdings] lies in the circumstances which put a premium on these small pieces of land. The premium is no doubt, due to the large population depending solely on agriculture to eke out its living.... It is not, therefore, the law of inheritance that is the evil, but it is the high pressure (of population) on land which brings it into operation. People cultivate the small piece not because their standard of living is low, but because it is the only profitable thing for them to do at present. If they had something more profitable to do, they would never prefer the small piece.[1]

According to Ambedkar the basic problem of Indian agriculture was that it was not capable of generating a surplus which ultimately created scarcity of capital. This resulted in the inefficient use of resources, surplus labour and superfluous employment, which by raising the cost of production culminated in low agricultural productivity. This in turn affected adversely the process of overall economic growth.

According to Ambedkar the process of consolidation of holdings could eradicate the ill effects of uneconomic holdings and lead to the progress of the cultivators. He favoured successful growth of industrialization and described how agriculture is improved by the side effects of industrialization. He stated 'industrialization facilitates consolidation. It lessens the premium on land. It must precede consolidation. It is a barrier against future sub-division and fragmentation.'[2]

On 17 September 1937 Ambedkar introduced in the Bombay Legislative Council a Bill seeking the abolition of the *Khoti* system. The *Khoti* system related to minor land tenures in the Bombay presidency. It prevailed in some parts of the Ratnagiri district and also in some parts of Kolaba and Thana districts. The *Khoti* tenure differed from the ordinary ryotwari, inasmuch as in the latter the occupants of the land were directly responsible to the Government for the payment of revenue, while in the former, the Government employed the services of the *khot* for the purpose of collection of revenue. The *khot* was called a superior holder while a tenant (i.e. occupant of the land) was referred to as an inferior holder. The *Khoti* system thus to some extent resembled the Zamindari system prevailing under the Permanent Settlement Act.

Under the *Khoti* system the khot was obliged to collect revenue from the tenants and to pay a certain part of it to the Government. Once such a payment was made, the khot enjoyed unrestricted freedom to do whatsoever he liked to the tenants. The khots generally misused such freedom and subjected the tenants to all kinds of exaction. The net result was that the tenants were reduced to a state of abject poverty. This agitated the tenants. They demanded the abolition of the unjust system of *Khoti*. The relations between the khots and the tenants were so strained that three khots were murdered by them. The system thus disturbed the peace and tranquillity of the presidency, therefore Ambedkar felt that it was imperative to abolish it.

Thus, by introducing a bill to abolish the *Khoti* system Ambedkar sought to put an end to the exploitation of the actual tillers of the land and establish a direct relationship between them and the Government. In the bill e also made provision for paying reasonable compensation to the khots. Thus, it proved to be a forerunner to the Land Reforms Legislation in post-independence India.[3]

For Ambedkar, agriculture was to be a State industry. He recommended that the State should acquire (along with the key and basic industries, and insurance) all the agricultural land held by private individuals whether as owners, tenants or mortgagees and pay them compensation equal to the value of the land. The State should divide the land acquired into farms of standard size and should let out the farms for cultivation to residents of the village on the following conditions:

(i) A farm was to be cultivated as a collective farm according to the rules and directions issued by the Government.
(ii) The land was to be let out to villagers without discrimination of caste or creed and in such a manner that there would be no landlord, no tenant, and no landless labour.
(iii) The State was obliged to finance the cultivation of collective farms by supplying water, draft animals, implements, manure, seeds, etc.
(iv) The thenants were to share among themselves the produce of the farm left after the payment of charges properly leviable on the farm.
(v) The State was entitled:
    (a) to levy the following charges on the produce of the farm:
        (i) a portion for land revenue;

(ii) a portion to pay the compensation to the landlord; and
(iii) a portion to pay for the use of capital supplied.

(b) to prescribe penalties against tenants violating the conditions of collective farming or working, in any way prejudicial to the scheme of the collective farming.[4]

Ambedkar called this scheme '*State Socialism*' and wanted it to come into operation as early as possible, but in any case within ten years after the Constitution came into operation.

Thus, Ambedkar's understanding on India's agricultural problems proved not only to be prophetic, but reflect his unflicting commitment to democracy based on liberty and equality as well.

III

THE PROBLEMS OF INDIAN CURRENCY

Ambedkar advocated a fresh perspective on the vital monetary issue about the problems of Indian currency.[5] His major area of research was on the history of the rupee from 1835 to early 1920s. He presented a pertinent explanation of all the important developments dating from the bimetallic experiment of the 1840s, the decline in the value of silver in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the abolition of the silver standard, the pegging of the rupee at 15s 4d, wartime developments down to the post 1918 exercises concluding in a floating rupee. He strongly argued against linking the rupee with gold in any way and recommended establishment of a fully-managed inconvertible currency with a fixed limit of issue. He concluded:

> It is much better to introduce a currency system which will do away with the exchange standard and also the gold standard reserve.[6]

Ambedkar pointed out that the exchange could not be said to be in complete harmony with the whole of the price level of a country. Exchange affected only such things as entered into international trade. Ambedkar, thus, thought more in terms of prices rather than in terms of exchange ratio. He remarked:

> That standard concern itself only with symptoms and does not go to the disease: indeed, on my showing, if any thing, it aggravates the disease.[7]

Thus, the vital issue was to close the mints for public and the Government too, so as to confirm the principles embodied in the English currency system. Ambedkar proposed that the Government should use part of the gold standard reserve for reducing the rupee currency by a substantial margin so that even in terms of reserve depreciation, it might remain limited to the needs of occasion.[8] On the whole, before the Royal Commission was established, Ambedkar spoke against the exchange standard and in favour of the establishment of a fully-managed inconvertible rupee with a fixed limit of issue which gave multi-faceted dimensions of ratio issue that immediately became the centre of monetary controversy in India.

Ambedkar was critical of the management of Indian currency by the British. He has given competent answers to the problems of Indian currency in the national interest to the particular conditions of the 1920s.

According to Ambedkar, stability of currency in terms of gold was of importance only to the dealers in gold, but its stability in terms of commodities in general affected all. His recommendation regarding a fixed limit of currency is a competent ground of relevance particularly in a system of 'monetary targetting'.

Thus, Ambedkar showed great scholarly insight in finding solutions to the problems of Indian rupee. His cloudless foresight in visualizing the future in the shadow of the present form the perspective of the stability of internal price level. This practical aspect of his vision is a noteworthy contribution to the Indian Monetary System.

IV

DECENTRALIZATION OF IMPERIAL FINANCE

The origin and development of provincial finance, major causes that led to enactment of the Reform Act of 1919 and his views on financial relationship between the centre and the provinces is the subject matter of his monumental work of 1925.[9]

The term 'Imperial Finance' was used for the finances of the central government during the British period. For the same idea the term 'federal finance' was used in the USA Provincial finance is equivalent to state finance in post-independence period.

The system of Imperial Finance was started in India in 1833. It became so comprehensive in 1858 when the Crown took over from

the East India Company, that no province had any separate power for legislating any separate financial resources. There was practically no power of creating or modifying any appointments in the service. The restrictions involved provided the Government of India with an opportunity interfere with all the details of provincial administration.[10]

The imperial system of the Government suffered from financial inadequacy. from the very beginning. The efforts of the finance ministers were rarely successful in restoring an equilibrium and staving off the hours of crisis.[11] The grave condition of imperial finance during the 1860s was the major cause to propose a federal plan to some of the British officials in the name of economy, responsibility, plenty and equity. Ambedkar opposed the federal plan on the ground of practicability and expediency. A new arrangement was made under which the revenues and charges remained imperial in their status, but their management was to be provincialized. Ambedkar refers to the system as 'Imperial Finance without imperial management'.[12]

In financial resolution of 14 December 1870, assignment of funds from the imperial treasury was adopted as a method of supply to balance the provincial budgets which was named 'budget by assignment' by Ambedkar. Commenting on the system he says:

> The assignments made to the provincial Governments for the year 1871-72 had been declared to be fixed and recurring. Recurring they were, but fixed they were not for every year since the start the Government of India kept on adding to and withdrawing from provincial budgets items of charges already incorporated in them. In accordance to these modifications in the incorporated charges, the imperial assignments had to be either reduced or augmented as necessity dictated.[13]

The next stage in the evolution of provincial finance was the budget by 'assigned revenue'[14] to give the provinces certain sources, the yield of which largely depended upon good management for the growing needs of the provincial services.

The third-stage budget by shared revenue[15] which was applied to all the provinces with effect from 1882-3, grouped the budget under two distinct categories wholly imperial and wholly provincial.

The subsequent revisions took place in 1887-8, 1891-3 and 1896-7, i.e. quinquennial in duration. The budget surplus of 1898-1913 enabled the Government to be more permanent in 1904 and a permanent settlement in 1912, which worked up to 1 April 1921, when provincial finance in British India entered an entirely new

phase. Here the history of the growth of provincial finance as it developed stage by stage under the old phase comes to an end. Ambedkar dealt in detail with the mechanism which interrelated the finances of the central and provincial Governments under the old phase.[16]

Ambedkar concluded that the only theory of financial relationship between the two Governments which accorded with the facts and agreed with law was that of aggregation of sources and distribution of the yield.[17] This conclusion is justified in several pages that shows his power of analysis and investigation.

V

THE TAXATION POLICY

One of the important taxes of the imperial system was the land tax. Land was regarded as the State property and cultivator is not the proprietor but only occupier. The land tax had been imposed irrespective of the question of necessity or justice. Ambedkar observed that heavy rates of taxation are ruinous and impolitic. He calculated the ratio of land revenue to the total revenue of India for the years 1792-3 to 1841-2 and came to a conclusion that the land tax was so heavy that the system of tax prevailing in India might well have been called a near approach to the single tax system.[18] The tax system based on each unit of land, taxes the poor man who had one acre of land and the landlord owning hundreds of acres, without realizing the vast income disparities between them, at an uniform rate produces a glaring inequality of treatment between the rich and the poor. He, thus, observed that land tax prevented the prosperity of agriculture.

Ambedkar felt that the customs taxes hampered the manufacturers of the country. There were internal customs and external customs and both were injurious to trade and industry. The internal customs were made up of transit and town duties. The country was divided into a number of small customs areas for the purpose of transit duties. Commodities which crossed the customs areas were liable to duty. The transit duties hampered trade, which in turn crippled the growth of manufacturing industry. The town duties which formed a part of integral customs duties worked towards de-urbanization.

Under these depressed conditions the Indian Industry was called

upon to meet external competition. But the external duties could not be said to have given any protection to the industry, because trade was left perfectly free, since tariff was based on political rather than economic considerations. The Indian import tariff showed variations based not on the nature of the imports but on the origin of the imports. Goods from England and goods shipped on English bottoms were charged at the rate of half of what goods of foreign origin, and shipped on foreign bottoms were charged. Moreover, British goods were allowed into India at lower rates than what the Indian goods had to pay under the internal customs, and this was done when England was prohibiting by such high tariff the entry of Indian-made goods and India-built ships; thus, Indian industry also suffered from heavy export duties. So, Ambedkar observed that the custom laws, internal and external blockaded trade and hampered industry.[20]

Ambedkar commented that there was no justice in taxation under the imperial regime. He said:

> The landlords who passed their lives in conspicuous consumption and vicarious leisure on the earnings of the poor tenants, or the many European civil servants who fattened themselves on pay and pickings, were supremely exempted from any contribution towards the maintenance of the Government, whose main activities were directed towards the maintenance of pomp and privilege. On the other hand, the salt tax and the mturpha and other oppressive taxes continued to harass the industrious poor.'[21]

Ambedkar urged the elimination of the salt tax from the revenue system of India. But, Government not only refused to accept this demand, it increased the salt tax rate in the 1887-8 budget.

Ambedkar concluded that the collapse of imperial system was due to a faulty fiscal system marked by injurious taxes and unproductive and extravagant expenditure.[22]

VI

THE EXCHANGE RATE POLICY

Ambedkar analysed the relationship between the exchange rate and external trade in his book—*The Problem of the Rupee*. The par of exchange between any two countries will be stable if they employ the same metal functioning as their standard money. On the other

hand, there can be no fixed par of exchange between two countries having different metals as their currency standards. In that case, their exchange is governed by the relative values of gold and silver and fluctuates as their relative value change. The gold-silver exchange which was stable before 1873 between England and India fluctuated widely after 1873. Sterling rupee exchange which was a reflection of gold-silver exchange, also fluctuated after 1873. One reason was the demonetization of silver as a standard money medium by the principal countries of the world due to the agitation for uniformity of weights, measures and coinages, while the other was a great increase in the production of silver compared to gold.[23] There was a continuous fall in the exchange rate due to the decline in the relative value of silver in terms of gold and it increased the burden of the Government of India, said Ambedkar, an increase due to the growth in the gold payment magnitude and also due to fall in the exchange rate during 1875 to 1892. The excess amount required due to fall in the exchange rate, rose from Rs. 41,13,723 to Rs. 76,54,999.[24]

To maintain the exchange stability Ambedkar suggested that since all important countries in the world moved towards the gold standard, the silver standard countries should abandon it and move in favour of gold, or, the gold and silver standard countries should establish a fixed ratio of exchange so as to make the two metals into a common standard of value.[25] He believed that the progress of trade depends on stability of exchange rate and price stability.

VII

CANONS OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

In 1949, while discussing the functions of the Comptroller and Auditor General Ambedkar said that during the framing of our Constitution, that Governments should spend the resources garnered from the public not only according to rules, laws and regulations, but should also see that 'faithfulness, wisdom and Economy' are adhered to in the acts of expenditure by public authorities.[26]

The remarkable thing about Ambedkar's canons of public expenditure is that they are ism-neutral. One can follow a policy of a large or small public sector and yet the principles behind these canons are applicable.

First, the canon of faithfulness. Faith in this context as defined by the dictionary a 'duty or commitment to fulfil a trust, promise. . . .' Thus, it is necessary for the Government to be faithful to the original intentions. For example, if a certain sum is allocated to a centre for higher education to improve the facilities without specifying the item of expenditure, a really faithful way of spending would be on libraries, laboratories and other items of teaching and research, rather than on frivolous things such as statues or imposing buildings.

Fidelity to the original intention must be tempered with wisdom, is the second canon of Ambedkar. A policy of the Government when executed may be faithful but may not be wise. While sagacity, prudence and commonsense are the all marks of a just and wise Government, it should also possess experience and knowledge that can be applied critically and practically in specific areas. In the context of a just utilization of public funds, economic wisdom becomes a paramount necessity.

The importance of the third canon of Economy take on a special meaning to achieve social well-being. The apparent faithfulness to the original intentions and wisdom are not sufficient in themselves for public expenditure. Economy in public expenditure does not simply mean a low level of public spending, but is the intelligent use of funds, so that every paisa fetches the most benefit.

These canons of Ambedkar are sufficiently flexible so that expenditure can be related to the state of the Indian economy. Ambedkar emphasized that the expenditure decision should closely relate to the specified objectives and the available resources, besides ensuring economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The allocation of expenditure among competing demands and the manner of utilization fall within the domain of these canons.

Ambedkar's canons can be used as a touchstone to see whether a particular item of expenditure is necessary or not. Every single expenditure decision should be assessed in terms of the *faithfulness* to the will of the people, *wisdom* as provided by the professionals in the field, coupled with well-considered and honest judgement in execution.

Following the canons scrupulously in individual items of expenditure can not always eliminate problems arising out of the broader economic policy pursued by the Government. But they can mitigate the harmful effects of ill-considered policies of the Government at the centre and the state levels.

VIII

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND SC's

All facets of a human being's development constitute human resource development. Obviously, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) are covered under this concept. Ambedkar left no stone unturned in his efforts to postulate and pursue social policy that has direct bearing on the advancement of the Depressed Classes. His human social policy inscribed in the constitution of India as safeguards and their implementation of these facilitated the human development of the untouchables. Accordingly, Ambedkar can be described as the architect of human resource development, the scope and significance of which form the core analysis in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), formulating the case for human development strategy. In fact, Ambedkar's social policy is a forerunner of the contemporary human development school of thought in public policy.

The human development approach postulates Government intervention and regulation in the development of education, health, nutrition, protection of the environment and the interests of the poor masses and weaker sections.

Ambedkar visualized a society where all social barriers between man and man were demolished, where man was measured by his worth and not by his birth, and where equality between man and man was vigorously pursued. This meant that income inequalities caused by wealth and caste among the population had to be reduced. He emphasized the imperative necessity of uprooting the caste system which weakened Indian Society.[27]

Ambedkar's prime weapon was arming Depressed Classes with political power by virtue of the numerous safeguards incorporated in the Indian Constitution to improve their socio-economic, educational and cultural conditions to augment their development from deprivation, social stigma and suffering. The identity and solidarity with which SCs are functioning and participating in the democratic elections is a testimony to Ambedkar's intellectual ideas and vision, and the safeguards introduced for securing social justice to the most depressed section of the Indian population. The SCs achieved substantial progress in the sphere of education and representation in public services in free India by virtue of the constitutional safeguards he had proposed.

The Human Development Index (HDI) developed by UNDP since 1990 is an outstanding innovation for measuring the level of human development. It takes into account three basic elements of human well-being; longevity, knowledge and the access of resources required for living measured by life expectancy, adult literacy and mean years of schooling as well as real GDP per capita in purchasing power parity.

The HDI Ranking of India is 135 out of 174 countries in the Human Development Report of 1996. But the achievements of human development over the last five decades reveals outstanding lessons asserting the benevolent role of public policy. High levels of human development can not be achieved at modest income levels unless the Government puts people at the centre of its plans.

Although Ambedkar's prime concern was the uplift of the Depressed Classes, he anticipated the imperative of human development on a wider plane long ago. The current human development tide which endorses public policy for social development is the fruit of Ambedkar's endeavour.

IX

LABOUR PROBLEMS

According to Ambedkar, the caste system is not merely division of labour, it is also division of labourers. It is a hierarchy in which the labourers are graded one above the other. Those who were at the bottom were known as untouchables and were not allowed to mingle with others and denied basic civil rights. The practice of untouchability has ruined the nation and the economy as a whole. Ambedkar observed that 'as an economic system, it (the caste system) permits exploitation without obligation. Untouchability is not only a system of unmitigated economic exploitation but it is also a system of uncontrolled economic exploitation.'[28]

Ambedkar believed that the caste system in India was a major obstacle to economic development. It generally did not allow people to teach professional skills to any other than their own caste members. Even if an individual did possess the skill necessary for a job, he would be reluctant to take up a profession of a caste lower than his own. In a caste-minded society, there is no willingness on

the part of the individuals to seek employment where they may be best suited. This inevitably reduces mobility of labour leading to inefficiency in production, thus, impeding economic development.

Ambedkar made every possible effort to eradicate untouchability in a very democratic and successful manner. He had also suggested a number of provisions for solving the problems of Indian labourers when appointed the labour member of the Viceroy's Executive Committee in 1942, which was found to be a landmark in the history of labour legislation in India.

X

STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ambedkar believed that the thrust of strategy for India's economic development should be on eradication of poverty, elimination of inequalities and on ending exploitation of the masses. He accepted the Marxian view that there is exploitation in the world; that the poor are exploited by the rich; and that the enslavement of the masses by the privileged few, leads to perpetuation of poverty and its attendant suffering.[29] Yet Ambedkar did not sympathize with the Marxist paradigm of development. In his essay 'Buddhism and Communism' Ambedkar expressed his view on communism. Unlike Marx, he did not accept economic relationships as the be-all and end-all of human life, and rejected the economic motive as the driving power behind all human activity. He emphasized economic, the social, religious and political dimensions of exploitation. Indeed, social and religious exploitation is no less oppressive than the economic exploitation in India. Ambedkar believed that communism stands for revolution and not for reformation. Communism advocates revolutionary methods for overcoming dictatorship, which he disliked, and believed that constitutional provisions and democratic means should be relied upon for the desired reformation. He rejected the totalitarian approach of Marxian progress, which thinks that the State is a temporary institution that will 'wither away' in course of time. He believed in a classless society but not in a stateless society. He maintained that the State would continue to exist as long as human society survived. Indeed in his book *States and Minorities*, he has entrusted the share with 'an obligation to plan the economic life of the people on line which I [will] lead to highest point of productivity

without closing every avenue to private enterprise, and also provide for equitable distribution of wealth.'[30] Ambedkar has advocated State ownership of agricultural land with democratic collectivized methods of cultivation and limited control of industries (i.e. heavy industries and large public utilities).

Thus, Ambedkar perceived an active but well-defined role for the State in the economic life of the country. He did not favour the imposition of arbitrary restraint on the economic processes.

XI

RELEVANCE TODAY

There are, surprisingly, huge similarities between the fiscal and monetary problems during 1833-1919 as studied by Ambedkar and the fiscal crisis that we are facing in the 1990s. The present crisis is briefly speaking because of external debt, rising prices, trade gap and the falling exchange value of rupee in the 1990s. To overcome this the Government of India initiated the devaluation of rupee by about 18 per cent in terms of dollar and sterling. Though there was need for correcting the exchange rate by taking into account the relative purchasing power of currencies; devaluation cannot solve the problem permanently as it causes inflation, in Ambedkar's view. The liberalization of import duties in India, to a large extent resulted in a trade gap of about Rs. 10,000 crores during 1992 and 1993.

Under the New Economic Policy, the public expenditure on infrastructure, education and other development activities are also reduced. But Ambedkar suggested increased expenditure on these items while reducing un-productive expenditure. Ambedkar believed that trade and industry should be encouraged with price stability, but not through exchange rate instability. In other words, trade should improve by improving the competitiveness of our industry. Foreign direct investment would not flow unless there was exchange stability and price stability. The Indian Government can mobilize the necessary revenue to solve the problem of fiscal crisis through agricultural income tax, as suggested by Ambedkar.

It may be interesting to observe that not only does Indian agriculture continue to suffer from the problems that Ambedkar

addressed but the problems have become more intense with the passage of time. As such Dr Ambedkar's analysis of the problem is as relevant, perhaps more, today than it was seven decades ago. Ambedkar's Bill on the abolition of the *Khoti* system possessed a far-reaching implications for Land Reforms in India. It proved not only to be prophetic but reflected his great commitment to democracy based on liberty and equality as well. Besides, Ambedkar's suggestion of speedy industrialization, is the soundest remedy for all the problems of Indian Agriculture even today.

To save the Indian economy from the fiscal crisis of today, it would be relevant to adopt the canons of public expenditure advocated by Ambedkar in terms of the *faithfulness* to the intentions of the will of the people, *wisdom* as provided by the professionals in the field, coupled with well-considered and honest judgement, and *economy* in execution. They can mitigate the harmful effects of the ill-considered policies of the Government of India. The allocation of public expenditure among competing demands and the manner of utilization fall within the domain of Ambedkar's canons, which can be seen (by the proposed Commission on Public Expenditure Management and Reforms in budget proposals 1996-7) as a touch-stone to see whether a particular item of public spending is necessary or not.

Ambedkar proved to be the father of human resource development in India by virtue of the numerous safeguards incorporated in the Indian Constitution to improve the socio-economic, educational and cultural conditions of the Scheduled Castes. They achieved substantial progress in the sphere of education and representation in public services. The identity and solidarity with which SCs are functioning and participating today in the democratic functions is a testimony to Ambedkar's foresight and humanism.

It is important to note that the issues of labour welfare raised by Ambedkar cannot be overlooked in the developmental process of Indian economy even today. What he said and what he did to improve the lot of the Indian labour is relevant even today. It is useful even now—even after fifty years of freedom.

Thus, Ambedkar's economic ideas are of great use for our present economy. We should adopt and execute his economic ideas so that we may enjoy a prosperous future in twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches* (hereafter *Writings and Speeches*), vol. I, Bombay, 1979, p. 474.
2. B.R. Ambedkar, 'Small Holdings in India and Their Remedies', *Journal of Indian Economic Society*, vol. I, 1918, p. 20.
3. *Writings and Speeches*, vol. II, pp. 96-103.
4. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 396-7.
5. See B.R. Ambedkar, *The Problem of Rupee, Its Origin and Solution*, London, 1923.
6. *The Royal Commission on Currency and Finance* (1926): Statement, vol. II, p. 237.
7. *B.R. Ambedkar*, Preface, p. vi.
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14. Ibid., p. 84.
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16. Ibid., pp. '137-71.
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18. *Writings and Speeches*, vol. II, 1982, p. 73.
19. Ibid., pp. 75-6.
20. Ibid., p. 77
21. Ibid., p. 78.
22. Ibid., p. 88.
23. Ibid., pp. 397-403.
24. Ibid., p. 416.
25. Ibid., p. 445.
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27. G.S. Lokhande, *Bhimrao Ranuji Ambedkar: A Study in Social Democracy*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 23.
28. B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables?* vol. IX, 1991, pp. 196-7.
29. N. Jadhav, 'Neglected Economic Thought of Babasaheb Ambedkar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, 13 April 1991, p. 982.
30. B.R. Ambedkar, *States and Minorities* in *Writings and Speeches*, vol. I, p. 34.

4

Dr Ambedkar on Education

J.V. Raghavendra Rao

Dr Ambedkar was one of the 'wretched of the earth',[1] 'the lowliest and the lost'[2] of the Indian soil who, by sheer articulation of his genius and prodigious industry, shot into the political horizon as a spectacular leader and an outstanding intellectual. He is to be reckoned with not only as a political emancipator, economic historian and extraordinary jurist and constitutionalist but a great savant and educationist too. Secondly, the spectrum of his ideas or action has not only influenced the process of emancipation of Scheduled Castes but many others too. In this paper, an endeavour is made to assess Ambedkar's ideas in respect of education and also how education influenced his outlook and action. The intent is to probe deep and critically evaluate the content and meaning of his ideas. This, *inter alia*, cannot be undertaken in separation from the biographical and the social context of his life.

II

Dr Ambedkar was born in 1891 in a Mahar family of Maharashtra, whose social rank was very low. His father, a Subedar-Major, was overly burdened with fourteen children, of whom Ambedkar happened to be the last. His father, obviously, had not enough financial means to support Ambedkar's studies. Ambedkar attended his high school studies in Parel, Bombay. He used to take his afternoon meals in the school and had no home support to buy books of his interest and choice. An avid and keen reader that Ambedkar was, he had to help himself by reading in public libraries. This left a deep impression on his love for education and its diffusion among the Dalits too. This later led to the formation of People's Education Society in Bombay.

The impact of his mentor Jotiba Phule is also revealed in the inauguration of the Siddhartha College, 20 June 1946. Here, we

would also like to make an interesting observation regarding the naming of the college, when a lone Mahar boy like Ambedkar passed his matriculation examination in 1907, the event became a matter of pride and celebration for the family and friends. On this occasion, one of his teachers, K.A. Keluskar, presented him a copy of the Buddha's life.[3] His appreciation of the rational and skeptic personality and leadership of Buddha which had a great impact on his religious as well as secular thinking, pushed him into the charismatic fold of Buddhism. Naming the College, hence, appears to be Ambedkar's personal tribute to the Buddha, whose inspiration has directed his thinking and activities in many secular matters, including education.

Ambedkar happens to be one of the few Mahar pupils who could go abroad for higher studies. With the help of a scholarship from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda, he went to the University of Columbia in America, from where he obtained his Master's as well as Ph.D. degrees. Among the professors who influenced him was a notable scholar[4] John Dewey. Dewey was a philosopher of rationalism and pragmatism. He also wrote prolifically on the American educational system and culture. He had a great belief in the uses of education and its potentialities to alter the values of individuals and prepare them for change. Greatly moved by Dewey's ideas on education and also experiencing the values of individual freedom and dignity in American universities and society. Ambedkar developed an almost doctrinal belief in the efficacious and transformatory character of education. As Dhananjay Keer has observed,[5] Ambedkar believed that increments in education would encourage the abandoning of obsolete traditional values and would also inculcate value preparation for change. Education coupled with law would user in a great degree of social change, for law was the essence of the State.

Another major source of impact on thinking was M.G. Ranade[6] who was a great advocate of rationalism, evolutionism and modernism, particularly in politics. Ranade believed that education was the best and surest warranty of social change, for changes primarily have to germinate in the minds of men before they can reach their inexorable end. Ambedkar carried these ideas within him and spurned the idea of force as against education as an instrument of social change.

One more aspect of his life profile which guided him to education was his Mahar background. As a student he was not permitted to learn Sanskrit of which he was fond. In the school at Satara where he had his early education, he experienced discrimination at the

hands of fellow pupils. When his teacher asked Ambedkar to solve a problem in Mathematics which other pupils had failed to solve, he attempted to go to the blackboard to solve the problem. But the fellow-students shouted against Ambedkar, for behind the blackboard lay the tiffin boxes of fellow pupils and his writing on the blackboard would lend a defiling touch to the food. Instead of discouraging him, this strengthened and fostered the iron will of Ambedkar to learn and gain education. Additionally, it appears to us that he found a great compensation and rejuvenation for his unhappy experiences in the garden of books and public libraries which were strewn with lofty ideas and fruitful lives. Apart from his exciting studies in various libraries in Columbia and New York, his deep apprenticeship at the feet of the master whose life-blood was found in the London Museum and India Office Library, etc., paved the way for the emergence of Ambedkar as a formidable scholar and a commendable educationist.

Yet another aspect which had a great bearing on his involvement with his career development and professional experiences. His postmatric employment in the state of Maharaja Sayajirao, and his later employment after his return from abroad in 1917 as a military secretary to the Maharaja, had deeply injured his being, for nobody treated him as a human worthy of dignity and social amity. He was treated by the staff and peons as a despicable object. His experience in respect of accommodation and food at the hands of other citizens was much the same. This happened to Ambedkar although he was an erudite scholar and a man of enviable academic accomplishments. None of his degrees could alter is status, for he carried the social stigma of a Mahar with him.

In November 1918, Ambedkar accepted the job as a Professor of Political Economy at the Siddhartha College, Bombay, until he left for London. Although he worked as a lawyer after his return from London, he had to complement his income by working as a Professor of Mercantile Law on a part-time basis for three years at the Batliboy Accountancy Institute. He also worked as an examiner for the Bombay University. After four years, Ambedkar became a full Professor at the Government Law College, Bombay. His interaction with students and teachers influenced his ideas on education, although some experiences were dark and disappointing. Subsequently, his assumption of the post of Principal of the Government Law College of Bombay in June 1935, enabled him to get insights into academic and administrative problems. His three years experience as principal,

and also a membership of the Legislative Council of the province of Bombay provided rich experience of the needs as well as the complexity of the problems of education, particularly with regard to the exploited people of the Mahar community.

The other important dimension which can partly explain his commitment to educational values as a means as well as an end, lies in the *Weltanschaung* (worldview) of the times shared by many leaders from Naoroji to Tilak, Phule, Ranade and Gokhale, etc. Almost from the times of Rammohun Roy, the innovative leaders of India had been championing the course of English education, for it was a source of new knowledge, national thinking and humanistic way of life. Unexceptionably, Ambedkar, too, shared the interest in education in general and the education of the Mahars in particular. The Mahars were steeped in illiteracy and superstitions like the *Karma* doctrine, etc., living the life of dehumanized and brutalized beings. Ambedkar firmly believed that education could bring not only a new consciousness among the Mahars but also impel them towards the praxis of self-liberation.

Ambedkar sought his inspiration for practical politics from Jotiba Phule and Justice Ranade. Apart from running journals, writing petitions and drafting manifestos he also sought to realize the idea of Dalit Liberation by starting many schools. In fact, he had an early encounter with V.R. Shinde in 1920 at Nagpur, regarding the self-management and initiative of educational institutions by the SCs themselves. He started the Siddhartha College at Bombay under the auspices of People's Education Society. Later, Colleges of Law and Commerce were added. In Aurangabad, the Milind College, the Ambedkar College in Mahad and another Ambedkar College run by neo-Buddhists at Nagpur, etc., are some of the signal achievements of Ambedkar and his followers. These institutions, have now been followed by a complex of institutions started for the enlightenment and uplift of the Depressed Classes.

III

We have presented earlier the biographical and social context of Ambedkar relating to his ideas on education. Now the discussion proper is in order. Ambedkar's basic educational philosophy is seen in the two objectives which governed the inauguration of People's Education Society, Bombay. They were (a) the search for truth and

(b) to practise humanitarian principles in one's life. The Buddhist principles of *prajna* (understanding) and *karuna* (compassion) seem to have been the beacon lights of not only a major part of his life but also his perspective of education. Inspired as he was by the rational approach of the Buddha in the east and John Dewey in the west, he called for inculcation of rational thinking and scientific temper among the masses in general, and students in particular. In his address to the Elphinstone College, Bombay, in December 1952, he exhorted the teachers and the taught in the university to meet the requirements as well as challenges of the modern world by production as well as application of knowledge. He warned that universities should continue to be sacred abodes of learning and not workshop centres which trained an army of clerks. He also bade the audience, to emulate and practise the great ideas set by the progenitors of Indian culture, like Ranade, Tilak, etc.

For the uplift of the Depressed Classes he developed a programme of education as a part of the general manifesto of the Indian Labour Party before the general elections of 1937. To stamp out illiteracy, he emphasized the necessity of full and compulsory education; liberal education, he knew was neither useful for the upper classes in the long run nor the Depressed Classes of Indian society. He advocated the adoption of diversified technical education. Since many pupils from the Depressed Classes did not have the financial wherewithal to prosecute their studies, he stressed the necessity of scholarships in educational institutions. Another interesting aspect of his programme of education was the divorce he sought between teaching universities and non-teaching universities.

Ambedkar was a great champion of universal primary education. An amendment to the Educational Act in Bombay Legislative Assembly was brought forth by the Education Minister who sought to introduce *charkha* in the primary schools. The *charkha* scheme drew its inspiration from Gandhi on the principle of 'earning while learning'. Ambedkar contended that the Gandhian scheme would deprive Scheduled Caste people of the curiosity and adventure of learning for they were the poorest in the social strata. They could be tempted to earn a little more than learn, unless and until education was made compulsory.

Although Ambedkar started educational institutions through voluntary effort and organizations, he strongly believed in the educational modernization of masses under the auspices of the state.

In his concept of state socialism he allocated a major role to the state in discharging its duties in respect of education of the unlettered millions of citizens in the country.

In respect of teaching in colleges and universities, Ambedkar was unhappy with colonial system of education in British and post-Independent India. Inspired by the freedom of choice of learning in American universities, he advocated a reorganization of subjects and courses to provide a wider exposure of knowledge to the pupils. Based on his first-hand experience he called for removal of inequalities in pay scales and status among academics involved either in teaching or research. He also abhorred the idea of a differentiated status for under-graduate and post-graduate colleges within the complex of university system.

Ambedkar immensely liked students. As Principal of the Government Law College, he took a keen interest in enriching and expanding the library and took care of their curricular and extra-curricular requirements and facilities. He was a conscientious teacher and worked hard to deliver his lectures with insight and information. According to him, a professor 'should not only be learned; he must speak in a clear tone. He must be well versed.' He also opined that professors should constantly seek knowledge and try for truth and practise it.

Ambedkar's opinion on education for different genders is interesting. He thought liberal education for girls was of no consequence. 'What is the use of Burkhe and Shakespeare to girls?' he asked. He wanted women to be more particularly trained in Home Science, Education and peripherally in other subjects. Men, of course, are free to pursue a variety of courses and studies, he said.

Ambedkar's life has been a continuum of study and struggle. His academic interest in crucial political and economic problems continued until the end. However, he stated that students in schools and colleges should not be involved in active politics. On the contrary, they should be engaged in the development of self-culture and self-help. Ambedkar exhorted the students to put a premium on industry and creativity. They should strive to attain goals and ideals dearer to them, otherwise life becomes less thrilling and meaningful.

Ambedkar's belief in a commitment to education is so deep and wide that it has affected the entire gamut of his outlook and activity. In his struggle against the Congress, the Muslim League and the British for the freedom and emancipation of Scheduled Castes he

used parliamentary methods of struggle. He believed in petition, representation and debate as a means of information as well as redressal of social problems. He appeared before many commissions such as the Royal Commission on Indian Currency, the Simon Commission and the Round Table Conference, etc., and vigorously pleaded for the uplift of the Depressed Classes. In contrast to this, Gandhiji used *satyagraha* and non-cooperation methods as major instruments of struggle. Ambedkar used *satyagraha* only three times in his life when major issues like temple entry in Nasik and land distribution in Vidarbha were at stake. He neither believed in *satyagraha* nor the 'change of heart' theory. He wanted to use *satyagraha* simply to educate the masses and ultimately legitimize any gains through the organ of laws. In this respect, Ambedkar's political bias seems to be in favour of constitutional, parliamentary and legalistic methods, which can be taken care of with the help of sound education. For education, after all, is a critical component of stability and change in the evolutionary process of societies.

Since Ambedkar did not embrace the philosophical anarchist in Gandhi nor the proletarian revolutionary in Marx, he emerges as a champion of education and educative struggle for the creation of consciousness in, and the liberation of the Dalit masses. Truth for Ambedkar has never been absolute and all his life he was in search of truth which would liberate the Dalits from the oppression of Hinduism. Although he started in 1938 at Nasik, Ambedkar had to undergo a long ordeal of judgement and evaluation before he finally converted a large number of Mahars into Buddhism in October 1956, at Nagpur. This was by far a gigantic educative effort which opened up a great process of learning which had goals of rationality, brotherhood, and equality. While opinions would differ on this last act of Ambedkar's life namely, conversion to Buddhism, none can doubt his quest for truth as he understood it—'to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield'.

NOTES

1. Frantz Fanon's famous revolutionary expression, which is also the title of his book.
2. Rabindranath Tagore's poetic phrase for the deprived and oppressed strata in *Geetanjali*:

Here is thy foot stool, here rest thy feet.
Where live the lowliest and the lost.

3. M. Sriram Murthy and P. Satyanarayana, *Ambedkar—the Awakener of Dalit Masses*, Gelgug, p. 18.
4. G.S. Lokhande, *Bhimrao Romji Ambedkar*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 10.
5. Dhananjay Keer, *Dr Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Bombay, 1961, p. 441.
6. W.N. Kuber, *Dr Ambedkar: A Critical Study*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 20.

5

Gandhi and Ambedkar: Why the Confrontation?

Gail Omvedt

This is Ambedkar's time. For many reasons, the chief of which is that the theme of 'social justice' has now become central to Indian politics, possibly a determinant in the elections, in the process bringing about the unity between Dalits and Shudras (OBCs), which Ambedkar had argued for but had grown pessimistic about, in the last years of his life.

There has also been a kind of revival of Gandhi in the last several years, answering to the needs of another 'new social movement': environmentalists have a tendency to look to Gandhi as a founding father, the first leaders of contemporary India to denounce the destructiveness of industrial 'modern civilization' and call for a different model of development entirely. Here also Gandhi stood in contrast not only with Nehru and the Leftists but also with Ambedkar, who supported not only industrialization but a highly centralized statist form of it, and was more concerned that Dalits should be able to leave the villages than reform them.

II

The question is: why these two towering figures of our times, Gandhi and Ambedkar, ended in a state of near total confrontation, rather than dialogue, and it is important to understand how this happened. Though many view Gandhi as the great national leader and Ambedkar as the one ready to compromise with the British in putting the 'social movement' first (and react emotionally to them on this basis) the reality is not so simple. Ambedkar's nationalism was expressed at many points, while Gandhi himself made it clear that his first concern was not so much independence but India's identity as a civilization, and that the worst fate that could befall it would be to

get rid of the British only to become like the British, with 'the tiger's nature, but not the tiger.'[1]

The difference was partly in the social networks each was involved in, Ambedkar irrevocably based in the Dalit rural and urban poor, Gandhi with his access to all the wealth, and resources of the Hindu upper castes. That Gandhi's 'social base' did not see his concerns in quite the same light as he did, is perhaps suggested by the fact that many standard works on Gandhi contain very little, specifically on untouchability and caste, though the question was as highly 'moral' and 'political' for Gandhi as anything else. Gandhi's taking a position in fact played a central role in building up the Congress as a national force, yet almost all upper caste leaders—including Leftists like Nehru and the Communists—saw it as a mere diversion.

Gandhi and Ambedkar had different concerns about what Indian independence should mean, but they were similar in placing the nature of that independence ahead of mere freedom from British control. Was it inevitable that their relations should develop so acrimoniously?

Throughout the 1920s, in fact, Ambedkar seems to have had a soft spot for Gandhi, perhaps taking him as a new phenomenon different from the Brahminic elitist leaders he hated. A photo of Gandhi adorned the pandal for the Mahad *satyagraha*; even the demands of the untouchables then were put in terms of 'their rights as Hindus, as Ambedkar held back from a full denunciation of Hinduism.

The real break came in the period 1930-2 with the events of the Round Table Conference, Gandhi's fast and the Poona Pact. The issue was not Gandhi's nationalism versus Ambedkar's separatism; it was rather that of Dalit autonomy within a broader national community. Ambedkar had gone to the first Round Table Conference as a representative of the untouchables, but he was almost alone among organized Dalit opinion of the time in not asking for separate electorates, in saying it would be satisfied with reserved seats if there were adult suffrage.

At the conference he gave an eloquent expression of support for independence, arguing that untouchables needed 'swaraj' because only with it could they have a chance of sharing in political power—the prerequisite for their liberation. But, with no possibility of adult suffrage, Ambedkar ended up supporting separate electorates for untouchables along with those for Muslims and other minorities. It was this that proved too much for Gandhi, and his emotional speech at the second Round Table Conference (he did not oppose separate

electorates for Muslims) was not so much from a stance as 'national' leader but as a Hindu, and as one who was adamant that untouchables should be treated as part of Hinduism. 'I would not seal the vital interests of the Untouchables even for the sake of winning the freedom of India. I claim myself in my own person to represent the vast mass of the Untouchables', he said, going on to say that 'it would create a division in Hinduism which I cannot possibly look forward to with any satisfaction whatsoever.'[2] The issue was precisely whether Dalits could attain an autonomy to decide for themselves; whether they would be part of 'Hinduism' or not.

The subsequent Communal Award and Gandhi's fast led to the Poona Pact of 1932, but Ambedkar's agreement was by no means due to a 'change of heart'. Afterwards he spoke of the events with great bitterness, adding 'to my mind there is no doubt that this Gandhi age is the dark age of India. It is an age in which people instead of looking for their ideals in the future are returning to antiquity.'[3] Yet Ambedkar himself was ready to return to Indian tradition, specifically Buddhism. The problem was that Gandhi's village-centred ideal was, to him, becoming identified with upper caste dominance, with a denial of autonomy. This was confirmed when Gandhi set up the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Ambedkar argued that the aim should not simply be uplift of untouchables but the eradication of castes; and that the main authority in carrying this out should be with the Dalits themselves. Gandhi refused, seeing the issue as one of purifying Hinduism and of upper caste Hindus 'making expiation' for their sins of untouchability. Practically the result was to have a nation-wide body of high-caste social reformers, wandering through untouchable quarters cleaning up children and propagandizing against drunkenness, deriving a certain amount of self-respect, but in the process binding the low castes to a national movement dominated by what Ambedkar saw as the 'bourgeois-brahman' elite. Ambedkar's insistence on Dalits and low castes holding power to create their own liberation was certainly correct as against Gandhi's paternalism.

III

This paternalism was also to flaw Gandhi's most telling critical trust regarding the path of development itself.

Hind Swaraj, originally written in Gujarati in 1909, was a powerfully

argued indictment of industrial civilization, denouncing parliament, factory exploitation, the practices of modern medicine and law and even modern transportation. Gandhi later came down a good deal from its most extreme directions, but it continued to indicate what he considered an ideal direction, a village-centred, handicraft-oriented production system, with fulfilment of basic but minimal needs. The questioning of modern industrial development in *Hind Swaraj* has come to seem more and more relevant as the ecological and human destructiveness of contemporary capitalism grows and the 'statist' alternative is discredited. Gandhi also succeeded in giving a mode of action that was an alternate to both 'Moderate' petitioning and 'Extremist' terrorism, that was militant, morally-based and capable of rousing the masses.

On these issues Gandhi seems to have more to offer than Ambedkar. Ambedkar was a Socialist, which Gandhi was not, and through the 1930s it was with Marxism and the Left that he seemed to be more in interaction/dialogue with than the Gandhians. But the Left was accenting heavy industry-based centralized development uncritically; the difference between Nehru, the Socialists and the Communists only boiled down to a matter of degree: how much state control over the industrial sector. The Left also assumed that villages would mainly be a source of surplus, not the heart of society with any dynamism of their own. Ambedkar fitted into this rather easily; villages to him were only 'cesspools' from which Dalits must escape; private property was, he assumed, the source of exploitation (he took this as the heart of Marxism, still valid) and thus could be ended by 'state socialism'—nationalization, the collectivization of land. This did not deal with hierarchical control of the administrative bodies, and exploitation by the elites (mainly Brahmins) who were at their top. As against this, Gandhi's comment that

> God forbid that India should take to industrialisation after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world like locusts

look remarkably prescient.[4]

But surely part of the reason for Ambedkar's industrialist statism was that the Gandhian alternative—the only viable model appearing at the time—seemed elitist and caste-biased. It was not simply a matter of a village orientation but of 'Ram Rajya' with an uncritical

acceptance of elite 'trusteeship'; of an opposition of industrial devastation tied to a religious belief in the limitation of needs. *Hind Swaraj* makes this clear:

> We note that the mind is a restless bird: the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our emotions the more unbridled they become. . . . Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures. We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago. We have retained the same kind of cottages that we had in former times, and our indigenous education remains the same. It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet. They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourising in them, and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages. The common people lived independently and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home Rule.[5]

The self-sufficient village was linked to the paternalistic rule of kings in a society regulated by intellectuals (Brahmins?). Not surprisingly, Ambedkar rejected it. It is however too bad that there was no real debate, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, on the nature of technology and industrialization in national development.

IV

With all their differences, Ambedkar and Gandhi stood on the same side on some issues, most crucially on that of non-violence. Part of the difficulty in dealing with this is that the discussion has been almost ritualized in India—partly perhaps as a reaction to Gandhism. Marxists, at any rate, frequently seem impelled to eulogize violence as their differentiating feature; particularly when, as with the Naxalites, the effort is to break out of the reformism of the established parties and parliamentary framework. 'Violence' is identified with being 'revolutionary'; and even Marxist academics have a strong tendency to argue that 'violence' exerted in social agitation is a sign that more revolutionary, lower-class interests are being expressed, while opting for satyagraha or other non-violent mass methods is a characteristic

of movements based on property-holding interests. Nor does it explain why Ambedkar opted for non-violence, unless he is taken as simply a petty-bourgeois mass-leader.

The fact is that there is a clear difference between violence as such and protest which is massive and rule-breaking, illegal in the context of the existing system and oriented to establishing a new system. The latter need not be 'violent' in the context of taking life; and in fact in the broad dialogue of India's independence struggle there have been many definitions of non-violence; to Gandhi riding on the trains without ticket was at times 'violence'; on the other hand, he could only endorse the arguments of Nana Patil regarding the 1942 movement in Satara that they were non-violent because they destroyed only property in their sabotage and committed personal physical violence (beatings) 'only to stop traitors'. What Gandhi achieved in his advocacy of non-violent methods was to establish this mass-oriented controlled militancy, to link it to tradition and Indian culture, giving it a moral base in the readiness to suffer and die for a cause and evolving in the process new, non-masculinist definitions of 'manliness'. Whatever Ambedkar's feelings about Gandhi's backward orientation, he also adopted Gandhian forms of agitation. And the result is that the Indian people today have at their disposal for socially legitimized agitations wider forms of militant and illegal activity than perhaps anywhere, from *hartals*, and *satyagrahas* and fasts to 'gheraos', 'rasta rokos', 'gavbandis', and 'panchayat' forms of occupying public space.

The difference between Gandhi and Ambedkar is that Gandhi claimed that non-violence was for him a 'principle' and not just a 'policy' (while for the Congress, he felt, it could only be adopted as a 'policy'), for Ambedkar it was primarily a policy. Yet Ambedkar also quite seriously dealt with the issue of means and ends, which to him was an important differentiating feature between Buddhism and Marxism. If Ambedkar appears more rational to us today, it is not because of the effort to give a moral basis to politics (much of Gandhi is very compelling in this respect) but because the advaita base of Gandhi's religion—non-violence out of a desire to limit action upon the material world; the rejection of needs linked with the rejection of technology and sexuality—is not one which we would choose. There are problematic dilemmas of these aspects of Gandhian non-violence, including the agonizing over the mercy killing of a sick calf at his ashram and his apparently unquestioned

belief—a stark warning to feminists that their appreciation of Gandhi should be limited—that a girl would be better off being killed if one could not prevent her being raped. With all of these problems, the contributions of a non-violent policy of mass struggle remain, particularly in an age when the forces of military technology are proving to be more rampantly destructive and brutalizing than ever.

NOTES

1. *Hind Swaraj*, 1935, p. 208.
2. *Dr Babasaeb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. II, Bombay, d.d., pp. 662-3.
3. *Federation versus Freedom*, in ibid., vol. I, pp. 350-2.
4. Cited by Ramchandra Guha, *Chipko: A Grassroots Perspective on the Environmental Debate*, p. 18.
5. *Hind Swaraj*, pp. 232-3.

6

The Great Conversion: Dr Ambedkar's Pilgrimage to Buddhism

D.C. Ahir

Dr B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) found the Hindu religion incapable of giving either spiritual solace or social equality to the depressed and oppressed. He decided in 1935, therefore to renounce Hinduism. Hence, a search for new religion began, and ultimately, he found solace in the teachings of the Buddha. In what follows, an attempt has been made to put in proper perspective the how and why of his pilgrimage to Buddhism, and its gains.

II

Prior to Dr Ambedkar's advent, for centuries, the Dalits were not only lowest of lowly, and devoid of even elementary human rights, but these unfortunate people were also damned as unseeables, un-approachables and above all untouchables, whose mere touch, and even shadow, would pollute the caste-Hindus. In short, they were made to suffer immeasurable deprivations and humiliations. How the monster of untouchability followed the untouchable at every step is very well illustrated by the life story of Dr Ambedkar himself. To recapitulate his experiences:

(i) At school at Satara, he was made to sit outside the classroom on a piece of gunny mat which he had to carry to the school. Many a time he had to go without water, not because there was no water but because he being an untouchable, had no right to drink from the common source;

(ii) At Satara again, some of the teachers would not touch his note-books for fear of being polluted;

(iii) Outside school, the position was even worse. 'Touch me not' was the rule for him everywhere;

(iv) As a man of learning and high official in the Baroda State in 1917, he was subjected to inhuman treatment, drinking water was not available to him in office; his subordinates kept distance from him—even the peons, fearful of pollution, threw files and papers on to his desk from a distance;

(v) At Baroda again, he could not get accommodation, and was thrown out even from parsi dharamshala. Hence, he had to resign in disgust and return to Bombay;

(vi) As professor in Bombay in 1918-20, he was treated as a pariah by the Hindu professors and was not allowed to drink water from the pot kept in the professors' common room; and

(vii) When in 1923, he started practice as a barrister in the High Court of Bombay, 'the solicitors would not condescend to have any business with him on the ground of untouchability'. Even the humble canteen boy would not serve him tea.

This being the case of Dr Ambedkar, who was a highly educated person, living in a metropolitan city like Bombay, it is not difficult to imagine the plight of the poor and hapless untouchables living in the smaller towns and villages. Dr Ambedkar rebelled against this injustice, attacked the Hindu social order, and declared in the strongest language his opposition to caste-system and other social evils prevalent there. He also challenged the absurd notion that the position of each individual in this life has been determined by his merit or demerit in his previous births, and that his place in the social organism is irrevocably fixed and cannot be changed. He fought bravely against the protagonists of inequality and exploitation, and made heroic efforts to inspire the downtrodden classes to raise the banner of revolt against the Hindu social order.

Hitherto, the untouchables were living the life of lethargy and inaction. In fact, they were not living; they were just existing under the notion that their pitiable condition was the result of their past *karmas* and that there was no escape from it; and no hope of changing it. Dr Ambedkar instilled a new life in them. He exhorted them to revolt against their slavery and serfdom. Through his numerous speeches, talks and articles he made these classes conscious of their degraded position; its cause; and the way to improve it. This created a new awakening among them, and they responded to his call for an action in a big way.

The heroic struggle for the liberation of the untouchables from

the yoke of Hindu social slavery was launched by Dr Ambedkar at Mahad on 20 March 1927 when, under his leadership, the untouchables for the first time asserted their human right by drinking water from a forbidden tank. The second important battle fought by Dr Ambedkar was at Nasik which lasted for more than five years from March 1930 to October 1935. The object this time was to secure the right of entry into Hindu temples. However, the long-drawn Temple Entry Satyagraha failed to bend the orthodox Hindus who refused to see reason. This convinced Dr Ambedkar that the decaying and decadent structure of the Hindu society was beyond repair, and that the salvation of the downtrodden lies only in being independent of the religion which has given birth to the curse of caste and untouchability. Hence, he advised his people 'to abjure Hinduism and embrace some other faith that would give them an equal status, a secure position and rightful treatment'. Announcing his intention to do so, Dr Ambedkar said at the Yeola conference on 13 October 1935 that 'unfortunately, he was born a Hindu but he would not die as a Hindu'.[1] Reiterating his resolve to say 'good-bye' to the Hinduism, he said at a conference in Bombay in May 1936:

> The Hindu religion does not appeal to my conscience. It does not appeal to my self-respect. . . . I tell you very specifically, *religion is for man and not man for religion*. To get human treatment, convert yourselves. Convert for becoming strong. Convert for securing equality. Convert for getting liberty.[2]

III

Some critics of Dr Ambedkar say that he turned to religion and embraced Buddhism towards the evening of his life in a desperate state of mind because of his unhappiness with the working of the constitution, and his failure in politics.[3] Others say that 'he became frustrated by the slow pace of change in social set-up and blurred the real issues by turning to Buddhism'.[4] There can be nothing farther from truth than these statements. Such critics ignore his 'solemn vow' taken as early as 1935 to renounce Hinduism. The fact that he took more than twenty years to do so proves beyond doubt that he took this crucial step only after careful and dispassionate consideration. As it was not at all a sudden step on his part, the question of embracing Buddhism 'out of frustration' or 'escapism' does not arise. The question as to why did he renounce Hinduism is, thus, a wrong

question. The more fundamental question that ought to be asked is as to why did he embrace Buddhism and not any other religion. When Dr Ambedkar, the liberator of the downtrodden, announced in 1935 his intention to renounce Hinduism, the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs promptly tried to induce him to embrace their respective religions. They even offered enormous money and other material gains for him as well as for his followers. But Dr Ambedkar scoffed at these tempting offers, and rejected the same without any hesitation.

The reason why he was not attracted by either Islam[5] or Christianity[6] was two-fold. Firstly, he was in favour of an indigenous religion, a product of the Indian soil. Secondly, he found on scrutiny that neither Islam nor Christianity had been able to do away with the evil of caste, the primary reason for the downtrodden to renounce Hinduism. Dr Ambedkar was not inclined even towards Sikhism. However, scared by the threat of the untouchables swelling the ranks of the non-Hindus, some Hindu leaders pressurised him to give a trial to the Sikh religion on the plea that Sikhism was a part of Bharatiya culture. The Sikhs also jumped at this idea as it would lead to sudden rise in their ranks, and in the flush of their enthusiasm they offered to establish a college for the benefit of the Depressed Classes. Accordingly, a Khalsa College was established in Bombay by the Sikhs, and Dr Ambedkar was made Chairman of the College Committee. Within a year, however, Dr Ambedkar's association with the Sikh mission came to an abrupt end. Apparently, Babasaheb found on close scrutiny that the social equality in Sikhism was confined to the four walls of the gurdwaras only. Beyond that, the Sikhs were no better than the Hindus so far as caste distinctions were concerned.

Finally, Dr Ambedkar chose Buddhism of his own volition after making an in-depth study of the *Dhamma*. He preferred Buddhism because he found the religion of the Buddha rational, scientific and epitome of morality, liberty, equality and fraternity. He also found that Buddhism can raise the downtrodden to the highest level as it had done in the past. Prior to the advent of the Buddha, India was unaware of the ethics of equality and universal brotherhood. The Vedic society was based on the principle of graded inequality; the Brahmins being at the top, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras in descending order. This rule of graded inequality regulated their rights and privileges as well. Even punishments for secular offences were based on the principle of inequality; the Brahmins

always getting the minimum and the Shudras the maximum punishments. The Buddha challenged the ancient origin of the caste, and showed the hollowness of the claim of the Brahmins of having been born from the mouth of Brahma. He also refuted the Brahmin claim that only they could attain spiritual virtues, and asserted that a man of any caste, colour or creed can develop in his heart such virtues. As Dr Ambedkar said:

> Inequality is the official doctrine of Brahmnism. The Buddha opposed it root and branch. He was the strongest opponent of caste and the staunchest upholder of equality. There is no argument in favour of caste which He did not refute.[7]

No wonder, encouraged by the spirit of equality preached by the Buddha, the downtrodden asserted their right of freedom and challenged the supremacy of the Brahmins. This weakened the foundation of caste system and in fact relegated the Brahmins to the background.

That the emergence of the Buddha had given a rude jolt to the caste-ridden Hindu society is also evident from the Hindu shastras. In a pauranic story received from Brahma, God is made to speak as follows:

> When the *Kaliyuga* comes, I send Buddha, the son of Suddhodana the pious, to spread the good in the creation. Then the Mahamuira, i.e. the red wearing ones who derive their origin from him, will change every thing, and the dignity of the Brahmins will be gone to such a degree that a Shudra and Chandala will share with them the presents and offerings.[8]

In view of such revolutionary social change brought about by Buddhism, it is not surprising that when Buddhism weakened a bit, the Brahmins took all possible measures to regain their lost power and prestige. They took measures not only to fortify caste system but also exterminate the teachings of the Buddha from India. To quote the words of Hardayal:

> The priests exterminated Pali in India. They did not detest Pali on account of philosophical doctrines or the ethical precepts of Buddhism. They even acknowledged Buddha as a great teacher and defined him. But they wished that Buddha's wonderful words should not be heard within India as those words would have the power of dynamite against the citadel of caste. They said: 'Perish Pali; Perish India; but our caste must rule'.[9]

That Dr Ambedkar was greatly influenced by the social gospel of

the Buddha is more than evident from his monumental work, *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, and other writings. In a talk on the BBC, London, in May 1956, he said:

> I prefer Buddhism, because it gives three principles in combination which no other religion does. Buddhism teaches *prajna* (understanding as against superstition and supernaturalism), *karuna* (love); and *samata* (equality). This is what man wants for a good and happy life. Neither God nor soul can save the society. Once it is realized that Buddhism is a social gospel, its revival would be an everlasting event.[10]

IV

Buddhism came to Dr Ambedkar through books. As he studied more and more about Buddhism, the love for the *Buddha-Dhamma* became stronger in him. But he deferred his plans to embrace Buddhism. In taking this decision, he may have been inspired by the story of the farmer of Sravasti in which the Blessed One says: 'Hunger is the greatest disease, and no preaching could be understood by a person when afflicted with hunger'. Realizing that his people not only suffered from 'hunger' but also suffered from numerous social disabilities, Dr Ambedkar consciously decided to go slow with his plans for conversion to another religion. Instead, he directed all his energies to liberate his people from the socio-economic thraldom. In order to achieve this object, he fought relentlessly the unjust society on all the fronts—social, religious, economic and political. His achievements were many and varied. He gave life to the lifeless; voice to the voiceless; courage to the weak and meek; and raised the untouchables from despised individuals to dignified citizens. He secured for them the socio-economic and political rights which brought them to the national mainstream. Not only that, he also enshrined their rights in the constitution of India, of which he was the chief architect.

While busy in the struggle for the socio-economic and political rights of the untouchables, Dr Ambedkar also kept up his study of Buddhism. Gradually, the love for Buddhism became stronger in him, and it came to be reflected in various ways. As early as 1943 he was found visiting the sacred Buddhist shrines and discussing his plans for the revival of Buddhism in India. In November 1945, a conference was called at 'Buddhanagar'. And in 1946, when

Ambedkar established the first educational institution in Bombay he named it 'Siddhartha College' after the personal name of the Buddha. Symbols as these indicated the trend of his mind and were a writing on the wall for his followers. So they sought advice from him as how best to understand and follow the marvellous *Dhamma*. In response to their persistent requests, Dr Ambedkar got reprinted in 1948 P. Lakshmi Narasu's book, *The Essence of Buddhism*, and recommended it for study to the would-be-Buddhists. In the preface to this book, Babasaheb also mentioned that he was himself writing a book on Buddhism. This book came out as a posthumous publication in 1957, under the title *The Buddha and his Dhamma*. Dr Ambedkar's love for and devotion to the Lord Buddha has left its imprint on the national symbols also. It was due to his efforts as the chief architect of India's Constitution that the Buddhist Wheel of Law (*Dharma Chakra*) was incorporated in the National Flag, and the 'Lions from an Ashokan Pillar' at Sarnath were adopted as National Emblem by the Constituent Assembly. In 1950, it became perfectly clear that embracing of Buddhism by Dr Ambedkar was a matter of time only. In that year, he asked his followers to celebrate the Buddha Jayanti. In the celebrations in Delhi he himself participated. Same year he contributed an article to the May number of the *Maha Bodhi* journal of Calcutta under the title 'Buddha and the Future of his Religion'. Summarizing his thoughts about the future of Buddhism, he said:

A true religion is that which consists of the following four characteristics:

(i) Religion, in the sense of morality, must, therefore, remain the governing principle in every society.
(ii) Religion, if it is to function, must be in accord with reason which is merely another name for science.
(iii) Its moral code must recognize the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity.
(iv) Religion must not sanctify or ennoble poverty.

Is there any religion, he asked, 'which satisfies all these tests? So far as I know the only religion which satisfies all these tests is Buddhism. In other words, Buddhism is the only religion which the world can have.'[11]

In May 1950, Dr Ambedkar went to Sri Lanka to participate, as a special invitee, in the First Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) held at Kandy from 25 May to 6 June 1950. Addressing the distinguished gathering of Buddhists from all over the world, he said:

I am an interested observer, not delegate. I came here with some very serious purposes. You probably know that there are people in India who thought the time had come when an effort might be made to revive Buddhism in India. I am one of them. The definite objects of my visit are: first, to see Buddhist ceremonial; second, to find out to what extent the religion of the Buddha is being observed here in its pristine purity; and third, to find out whether the Order of Bhikkus is engaged or not in serving the laity, adversing and making it perfect in the way the Buddha wished it to be.[12]

On return from Sri Lanka, wherever Dr Ambedkar went, he talked of the Buddha and Buddhism. In May 1954, he spent two weeks in Burma at the time of the Buddha Jayanti celebrations and studied the Buddhist way of life in the land of the Pagodas. Thereafter, Babasaheb was often seen in the company of the Buddhist monks and scholars. Speaking in the series 'My Personal Philosophy' a talk on the All India Radio, on 3 October 1954, he said:

Negatively, I reject the Hindu social philosophy propounded in the *Bhagavadgita*. . . . Positively, my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality and fraternity. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my Master, the Buddha.[13]

In December 1954, Dr Ambedkar again visited Burma. This time he participated in the Third Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. After the conference, he spent a week as a guest of an Indian friend, Dr R.L. Soni. It was there that Dr Ambedkar resolved to come formally to the fold of Buddhism in 1956. On return from Burma, Dr Ambedkar concentrated all his attention on the plans for the conversion ceremony. Thoughtfully, he selected the site for this historic event, and requested the most venerable U. Chandramani Maha there to lead him to the blessed religion of the Buddha. In the meanwhile, he completed his monumental treatise on Buddhism, *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, in which he re-interpreted the *Dhamma* to show that it can amply meet the requirements of modern man. His emphasis is on the social gospel of the Buddha. According to him, to maintain purity in life is *Dhamma*; to reach perfection in life is *Dhamma;* to give up craving is *Dhamma;* to believe that all things are impermanent is *Dhamma;* to believe that *Karma* is the instrument of Marla Order is *Dhamma*. And *Dhamma* is *Saddamma* as it makes learning open to all; as it teaches that mere *prajna* (wisdom) is not

enough, it must be accompanied by *shila*, *karuna* and *maitri*. *Dhamma* is *Saddamma* as it breaks down barriers between man and man, it teaches that 'worth' and not 'birth' is the measure of man; as it promotes equality between man and man, and also between man and woman. In brief, *Dhamma* teaches equality in all respects. It is all embracing and for the entire humanity.

Since Dr Ambedkar had not indicated the sources from where he had quoted the teachings of the Buddha, the readers felt a little handicapped to understand as to where the author was quoting the Buddha and where he was speaking for himself. This deficiency was rectified by Venerable Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan (1905-88), who translated the *Buddha and his Dhamma* into Hindi in 1960. While translating it into Hindi, he also added footnotes tracing laboriously as many as 464 sources of the Buddha's teachings quoted by Dr Ambedkar. According to these notes, the life story of the Buddha up to His Renunciation, based on Asvaghosha's epic poem '*Buddha-charita*' or 'Life of the Buddha' composed in Sanskrit long, long ago. The missionary life of the Blessed One is, however, based on the Pali sources. Similarly, the teachings of the Buddha are also invariably taken from the Pali Tripitaka. Occasionally, Dr Ambedkar has also relied on the Pali commentaries and the *Milinda-panha* (Questions of King Milinda). Analytically, the sources are: *Buddhacharita* (90), *Anguttara Nikaya* (28), *Digha Nikaya* (27), *Majjhima Nikaya* (41), *Samyutta Nikaya* (22), *Khuddaka Nikaya* (232), *Dhammapada* (210) and others (22), *Dhammapada Commentary* (5) and *Vinaya Pitaka* (19).

Buddhism is, in essence, a way of life. And the well known anthology of the select verses of the Buddha, *Dhammapada*, is the best guide for any one willing to follow the Buddhist way of life. 'One never turns in vain', says an admirer, 'to these stanzas of incomparable beauty for advice, for alleviation of life's manifold pains, or for message of cheer and penetrating insight'. Dr Ambedkar, too, held the same view. Significantly enough, the section on 'the Buddhist Way of Life' is entirely based on the *Dhammapada*. Here Dr Ambedkar has presented 170 select verses from the *Dhammapada*, after re-arranging them under 13 headings keeping in view their relevance and importance. In brief, it can be safely said that the 'Dhamma' as told by Dr Ambedkar is the same as the *Dhamma* preached by the Buddha. Wherever the modern *Bodhisattva* has added something of his own, it is only to present the Buddha's teachings in right perspective.

Turning again to the story of Dr Ambedkar's pilgrimage to Buddhism, we find that he embraced Buddhism on 14 October 1956, the auspicious day of *Vijaya Dashami*. The historic conversion ceremony at Nagpur marked the end of pilgrim's journey. Verily, it was the Day of Deliverance for Dr Ambedkar and millions of his followers. After the great event was over he felt relieved. Addressing the vast gathering, he said in an emotional voice: 'I started the movement of renouncing the Hindu religion in 1935 and since then I have been continuing struggle. This conversion has given me enormous satisfaction and pleasure unimaginable. I feel as if I have been liberated from hell.'[14] He then called upon those to stand up who were prepared to embrace Buddhism. Thereupon, the entire crowd rose as one man. And in loud and joyous tones they repeated the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts after Babasaheb. In addition, he also administered to them the twenty-two vows[15] which he had specially prepared to ensure that his followers renounce their old religion fully and become good Buddhists.

V

It is not difficult to attract people towards political revolutions because politics has the charm of power. But social or religious revolutions do not have anything of this kind to offer and to induce people to change their religion is the toughest job. Further, since in modern times man has been affected to a great extent by the materialistic ideas he has not only become money-minded but his respect and reverence for religion and moral values are also gradually evaporating. Under such circumstances, conversion of people from one faith to another has become really a much more difficult task than it was ever before.

In 1891, the year in which Dr Ambedkar was born, and the year in which Anagarika Dharmapala initiated the Buddhist revival movement, India had 50,000 Buddhists. In spite of his best efforts, and of other pioneers, sixty years later, in 1951 the Buddhist population in India had risen to 1,80,000 only. Then came Dr Ambedkar, the modern *Bodhisattva*. According to tradition, a *Bodhisattva* employs the following four Elements of Conversion. Firstly, he gives *dana* of wealth and material things; secondly, he always speaks to the people

in a loving manner; thirdly, he does good to them; and fourthly, he himself practices the virtues he recommends to others.

Dr Ambedkar, too, employed these methods to achieve his ends and he succeeded in his efforts as he had the foresight and wisdom of a *Bodhisattva* and also knew the value of strategy. He gave *dana* of wealth in the shape of human rights to the downtrodden who were hitherto treated as dumb-driven masses without any privileges or rights whatsoever. He created and secured for them social, political, and even service rights. He attracted people towards Buddhism by laying emphasis on its message of social equality and scientific outlook so badly needed in the atomic age of today. First, he prepared the ground by hard work for more than 20 years and made the masses understand the drawbacks inherent in their traditional faiths as well as the qualities of the *Buddha Dhamma* and the advantages that would accrue by the suggested change. And when he found the soil fertile, he sowed in it the seed of the *Dhamma* which is in the process of becoming a flourishing tree.

The great conversion ceremony at Nagpur on 14 October 1956 when Dr Ambedkar brought instantly half a million people to the fold of Buddhism was, in fact, a great miracle. Never before in the history of any religion in the world, so many people, at one time and at the instance of one man had changed their religion. This historic event not only changed his destiny but changed the course of the history of Indian Buddhism as well. On this day, the Buddhist revival movement in India entered into an era of intense activity which can be rightly called the 'Ambedkar Era' of Indian Buddhism.

Though Babasaheb passed away within eight weeks of the Nagpur miracle yet the conversions continued unabated. As a result, there has been an unprecedented increase in the population of Buddhists. In 1981, India had 47,19,796 registered Buddhists. Today, there are nearly six million Buddhists in India. The Indian Buddhists can now be conveniently divided into four distinct groups. Firstly, there are survivals from the Buddhist period. Secondly, there are ethnic overlaps from the neighbouring countries. The third category is represented by those who were attracted towards Buddhism as a result of the missionary movement spearheaded by the Maha Bodhi Society. The followers of Dr Ambedkar form the fourth group. Of all the groups, the followers of Dr Ambedkar form the most dominant group. They are over 90 per cent of the total Buddhist population in

the country. Of them, 84 per cent live in Maharashtra, the home state of Babasaheb. The rest are scattered throughout India. The position of this group is likely to improve further as more and more followers of Dr Ambedkar are seeking refuge in the *Buddha-Dhamma*.

The advent of Dr Ambedkar undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new era; an era of hope, prosperity and progress for Buddhism. He was certainly the hero of the contemporary Buddhist revival movement in India. Had he not initiated mass conversions in 1956, Buddhism would not have become so soon a living religion in the land of its birth. If today in India, there is respect and reverence for the Buddhist values, and Buddhism is regarded as the broad highway to salvation by the teeming millions, the credit should mostly go to Dr Ambedkar.

VI

It may be relevant to consider as to what has been the impact of Buddhism on its new adherents, the people who responded to the clarion call given by Dr Ambedkar and embraced Buddhism. As of today, the largest number of the followers of Dr Ambedkar who have embraced Buddhism are in Maharashtra. They are as many as 84 per cent of the total Buddhist population in the country. How far the religion of the Buddha has changed their lives has been studied by some research scholars. According to one of them, the following gains are worthy of note.[16]

(a) They have got rid of their inferiority complex. They have a fresh sense of identity and a newly acquired confidence. What is more, the youth among them have completely shed the old superstitions that had crammed their existence and have adopted a more rational view of life; and

(b) There is a new cultural and social renaissance which has transformed Buddhist youth. They no longer believe in pre-ordained fate or in any of the ancient rituals. Only hard work, education and a rational approach can bring progress, they believe. Compared to high-caste Hindu youth, their attitude seems to be firm, progressive and scientific.

In other words, the adoption of Buddhism has brought about a revolution in the attitude of the followers of Dr Ambedkar. They

have liberated themselves from the stranglehold of the dominant caste Hindus. And elected by the new feeling of pride, identity and cultural milieu, they no longer brook any indignity over their rights. Though economically still weak, they are marching ahead with courage and confidence.

NOTES

1. Dhananjay Keer, *Dr Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Bombay, 1987, p. 138.
2. Dr Ambedkar's written speech in Marathi at the Mahar conference on 30-1 May 1936 was first published by the Government of Maharashtra in the special number of *Lok Rajya*, dated 16 April 1981. It was translated into English by Shri Vasant Moon. Also see D.C. Ahir, *The Legacy of Dr Ambedkar*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 20-3. See also Ahir, *Heritage of Buddhism*, Delhi, 1989.
3. W.N. Kuber, *Dr Ambedkar: A Critical Study*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 313.
4. Yashodhara Dalmia, 'Scheduled Castes—A View from Below', *The Times of India*, 15 December 1974.
5. Inspite of the concept of Brotherhood in Islam, the Indian Muslims do observe caste distinctions. In fact, as says Dr Ambedkar, 'The Muslim society in India is afflicted by the same social evils as afflict the Hindu society. Indeed, the Muslims have all the social evils of the Hindus and something more. That something more is the compulsory system of Purdah for Muslim women.'
6. Caste feelings among the Christians are much more pronounced. The Church and the Christian community in southern India, where there are large number of Christian converts from lower classes, remain divided on the basis of caste. There, the Christians, notwithstanding their conversion, continue to follow caste divisions among themselves. Not only that, different castes even maintain different churches.

   In his thought-provoking treatise, *The Untouchables, Who were they, And Why They Became Untouchables*, published in 1948, Dr Ambedkar says that the Untouchables, now known as Scheduled Castes, were Buddhists in the past, and that they were dubbed as Untouchables by the Brahmins when Buddhism declined. He considers the origin of untouchability as a result of hatred against Buddhists by the Brahmins.
7. B.R. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, Bombay, 1957.
8. Alberuni, *India—An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature etc.* (about AD 1030). Translated by Edward C. Sachau, Delhi, 1964, pp. 380-2.
9. Hardayal, *The Maha Bodhi Journal*, Calcutta, 1938, p. 474.
10. Keer, op. cit., p. 490.

11. D.C. Ahir, *Dr Ambedkar on Buddhism*, Bombay, 1982, pp. 23-5.
12. Ahir, *The Legacy of Dr Ambedkar*, 1990, p. 154.
13. Ibid., p. 156.
14. Ahir, *Dr Ambedkar on Buddhism*, p. 35.
15. Of these special vows, the first eighteen vows require the initiates into Buddhism not to worship the Hindu Gods and Goddesses, not to regard the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu, not to perform the traditional Hindu rites for the dead, and not to employ Brahmin priests for any rites and ceremonies. The next two vows lay emphasis on equality of all human beings. The vows from 11 to 18 call upon the new initiates into Buddhism to practise the Noble Eightfold Path and the Ten Paramitas and to lead a life in which Right Knowledge, Right Conduct and Compassion are harmoniously interwoven. The last four vows practically sum up all the vows. These vows enjoin upon the newcomer to renounce Hinduism because it is based on inequality and adopt Buddhism as his religion; to firmly believe that the *Dhamma* of the Buddha is the true religion; to believe that he is experiencing a (spiritual) rebirth; and to solemnly declare and affirm that hereafter he will lead his life according to the teachings of the Buddha.
16. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 15 November 1978.

7

Dr Ambedkar's Contribution to Dalit Upliftment through Political and Constitutional Means

J.P. Misra

Dr B.R. Ambedkar used political means most consistently to better the condition of the Dalits. From the very beginning his effort was towards securing representation on legislative and political bodies, formation of political parties, seeking representation of special interests of untouchables, agitating for constitutional guarantees and creating a firm political base for them. An attempt is being made here to describe the process by which the Dalits, operating under social degradation, perceived the potency of politics as a means of ameliorating their social condition under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar. Our concern is to evaluate the extent to which Dr Ambedkar achieved these ends and identified the manner in which he prepared a community like this to acquire political skills and capabilities favourable to their assimilation in the broader political culture of the nation. Accordingly, this paper traces Dr Ambedkar's quest for social justice all through his illustrious political career.

Dr Ambedkar appeared on the political scene for the first time in 1919 when he was called to testify to the Franchise Committee which was gathering material for the implementation of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Ambedkar's testimony filled ten closely printed pages and initiated what can be rightly called the Ambedkar Era. He argued that Dalits, whom he characterized as 'slaves', 'dehumanized', and 'socialized as never to complain' must have communal representation since 'untouchability constitutes a set of interests which the untouchables alone can speak for', and representation 'in such number as will enable them to claim redress'.[1]

In the decade between the sessions of the Franchise Committee and those of the Simon Commission in 1928, which provided the next opportunity for Dr Ambedkar, a great deal of organizational

work went on. It would be sufficient for our purpose to refer to the Mahad satyagraha of 1927. Mahad town in the Kolaba district, south of Bombay, was the venue of a conference of Dalits. At the meeting, a decision was reached to test the resolution of the Bombay Legislative Council that all public places should be open to Dalits. The conference attenders marched to Chowdar tank, a large pond on the outskirts of the town in a caste Hindu area. Leaders of the procession then stopped and drank water, attempting a symbolic fulfilment of the law. Soon a rumour had spread throughout Mahad that Dalits were going to the Vireshwar temple to attempt entry and the procession and conference ended in rioting.[2] The caste Hindus purified the tank and the untouchables planned another demonstration. At the second conference held later in the year 1927, a second satyagraha for water did not take place. The district magistrate appeared with an injunction based on a suit initiated by caste Hindus on the grounds that the tank was private property. Dr Ambedkar preferred to fight in the courts rather than on the streets and persuaded the conference members to disperse. The legal battle ended ten years later with the judgement in favour of Dr Ambedkar. The Mahad satyagraha may have failed to achieve its specific purpose at the time, but it was successful as a rallying point for the internal reform of Dalits, the public expression of their grievances and the stimulation of a sense of unity.[3]

The reaction of Dalits to the Simon Commissions's tour of India was far different from that of the Congress or the moderates. Eighteen Dalits association testified willingly to the Commission, sixteen of them asking for separate electorates for untouchables. Ambedkar who saw nothing wrong in the exclusion of Indian in the Simon Commission, came forward to represent his views before it, and expected that it would help the cause of the untouchables. However, he did not renew his request of 1919 for separate electorates.[4]

Dr Ambedkar's nomination to the Round Table Conference, called in 1930 in London to discuss India's future Constitution, was an acknowledgement of the leadership he had gained and the very fact of his participation in this Round Table Conference and two others, extended his fame to every corner of the country.[5] He wanted the Dalits to be politically empowered and insisted during the first Round Table Conference that the issue must be looked upon in that manner. He explained:

We are often reminded that the problem of the Depressed Classes is a social problem and that its solution lies elsewhere than in politics. We take strong exception to this view. We hold that the problem of the Depressed Classes will never be solved unless they get political power in their own hands. If this is true, and I do not think that the contrary can be maintained, then the problem of Depressed Classes is, I submit, eminently a political problem and must be treated as such.[6]

During the second Round Table Conference there was an unproductive meeting Gandhi and Ambedkar and the two leaders expressed different and conflicting viewpoints during the deliberations of this session. Gandhi denied the recognition of the Depressed Classes as a minority and hence eligible for political safeguards which made Ambedkar bitterly critical.

The British Prime Minister, Ramsay McDonald, announced the Communal Award on 17 August 1932. The British proposal was that there would be a number of special seats for the Depressed Classes which were to be filled by election from special constituencies in 'which only the members of Depressed Classes electorally qualified will be entitled to vote.[7] Depressed Classes would also be entitled to vote for general constituencies. The selected constituencies were to be formed only in areas where the Depressed Classes were most numerous.

Ambedkar generally welcomed the Award, though he thought that it was still possible to improve upon it. He complained to the Secretary of State for India that the representation of untouchables was still inadequate and was worried that the special constituencies were to last only for a limited period.[8] However the implementation of the Award was immediately suspended by Gandhi's decision to commence his 'fast unto death' on 20 September 1932, to protest against the grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes. The fast sent shock waves throughout the country. Everyone wanted to save Mahatma Gandhi's life. The British Government was prepared to accept any modification in the Award provided it was agreed upon by the caste Hindus as well as the untouchables. Since Ambedkar had all along represented the cause of the Depressed Classes before the British Government it was for him to decide about any immediate action. Ultimately, he was prevailed upon to accept a modified formula to save Gandhiji's life.[9] This came to be known as the Poona Pact.

The outcome of the Poona Pact was to spotlight Ambedkar again,

adding to his fame and giving to his leadership more of an all India stature. One way of explaining the conflict between Ambedkar and Gandhi is to say that the former saw advancement for untouchables in terms of using political means to achieve social and economic equality with the higher classes, while Gandhi held a more traditional concept of *varna* system cleansed of untouchability, in which untouchables would be Shudras and their unclean work made honourable.

As the 1937 elections for the provincial lagislatures under the Act of 1935 approached, Ambedkar gave the political movement a specific focus by establishing the Independent Labour Party.[10] He had been persuaded to form a party with a broader base rather than with the Depressed Classes alone, and a party modelled on the pattern of the English Labour Party. The executive committee of the party included many of the caste Hindus who had worked with Ambedkar in social effort for the previous ten years. In the elections of 1937 the party won ten of the fifteen reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and three general seats in the Bombay Legislative Assembly and three of the Central Provinces & Berar's reserved seats. During its short lifetime from 1937 to 1939 when the Congress ministry functioned, the Independent Labour Party operated with vigour but without much effect in the Congress dominated Bombay legislature. With Ambedkar's announcement in 1935 that he was contemplating renouncing Hinduism, the establishment of a political party in 1936 and considerable success in the 1937 elections, the shift from attempting to gain status in matters of religion to organizing political activity was nearly complete.[11]

The next effort of Dr Ambedkar lay in the formation of the Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942. The newly-established party did not fare well in the 1945 elections. Ambedkar's official position as Labour Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council prevented him from taking part in party organization which could have been a factor for its poor show.

The early years of independence found Ambedkar in a position from which he was ablè to operate constructively and cooperatively. He won a seat in the Constituent Assembly in 1946 'with no greater aspiration than to safeguard the interest of the Scheduled Castes'.[12] But he was soon after called upon to undertake more responsible positions. He was elected the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly and was also included in the Union

Cabinet as Law Minister. He played a unique role in Constitution-making. He incorporated into it various values we cherish. Thus he addressed himself to the task of securing social justice for all the backward classes in the country under the mandate of a new Constitution.

When the Constituent Assembly met, there was complete unanimity among its members regarding the need to provide for the Bill of Rights in the new Constitution. He had been pleading continuously for an elaborate system of fundamental rights for the minorities in particular and for citizens in general. His fight for social justice was the main plank in his struggle as a leader of the Scheduled Castes. He was convinced that social justice could not be secured for one and all unless it was enshrined in the Constitution itself. His views on fundamental rights are elaborately expressed in his book *States and Minorities* which is itself in the form of a model Constitution. Ambedkar largely depended upon the constitution of other countries where conditions analogous to those in India prevailed.

Ambedkar designed these rights with the chief objective of eliminating and abolishing inequalities. The safeguards he contemplated against a possible invasion of the state or the individual, was through the judicial power guided by the due process of law. He had fully realized that rights without legal remedies were of no use. Due to Ambedkar's influence the fundamental rights as provided in the Indian Constitution were more elaborate and comprehensive than in the Bill of Rights in any other Constitution.[13] This was necessitated by the special problems of diverse religions, cultural and social conditions of a heterogenous Indian Society. He thought that these were also intended to provide not only security, and equality of citizenship, but also certain standards of conduct, citizenship, justice and fair play. It is in this part of the Constitution that the principles adumbrated in the preamble were to find fuller expression.

Ambedkar maintained that reasonable restrictions were indispensable if the rights guaranteed were to be fully enjoyed by one and all. In reply to criticisms in the Constituent Assembly, Ambedkar replied thus:

> The criticism insofar as it seeks to distinguish fundamental rights from non-fundamental rights are not sound. It is incorrect to say that fundamental rights are not sound. It is incorrect to say that fundamental rights are absolute while non-fundamental rights are not absolute. The real distinction between the two is that non-fundamental rights are created by agreement

between parties while fundamental rights are the gifts of the law. Because fundamental rights are the gifts of the state it does not follow that the state cannot qualify them.[14]

As to the criticism on the provisions regarding the suspension of fundamental rights, Ambedkar said 'in certain cases, where, for instance, the state's very life is in jeopardy, those rights must be subject to certain amount of limitations. Consequently, the superior rights of the state to protect itself in times of emergency so that it may live to discharge its functions in order that the individual under the aegis of the state may develop must be guaranteed as safely as the rights of an individual.[15]

This able defence of the limitations of fundamental rights by Ambedkar is a tribute to the constitutional acumen which set at rest all misgivings and criticism. Ambedkar's contribution in this regard lies in that he conceived a system of rights with necessary limitations in the interest of the individual freedom with the authority of the state. He evolved and incorporated a philosophy of rights based on the need for balancing individual liberty and the need for social control which alone could provide social justice.

Ambedkar strove thoughout his public life for the emancipation of the untouchables in particular and other minorities in general. He was eminently suited to secure justice and fair play to them and pave the way for their all-round progress in a free and just society. His anxiety was not just to seek some concessions from the Government or to be content with a few more seats for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes. Ambedkar was anxious, on the other hand, to make use of the opportunity of Constitution-making for solving the problems of the Scheduled Castes on more enduring grounds and forever. The attitude he adopted at this juncture was one of mutual effort and adjustment among the majority and minority communities in a spirit of give and take. He fully supported the provisions in the Constitution, recognizing the rights for the religious and cultural minorities in the country.

In this connection special mention may be made of Article 17 of the Constitution which abolishes the practice of untouchability in any form. In a simple and brief way this article abolised this age-old anachronism of our society. Ambedkar was the man who was destined to emancipate his unfortunate brethren.

It has been pointed out that Article 17 did not create any particular right and privilege.[16] Ambedkar was aware of this fact. But as he had pointed out earlier, it was the only effective way in which

the determination to eradicate this evil, root and branch, could be expressed emphatically.

Untouchability was one of the greatest disabilities suffered mutely by nearly one-sixth of the country's population. If a right meant a remedy against a disability, the fundamental right created in Article 17 definitely proved a greater charter for deliverance to these people.

The main object of Ambedkar's life was to bring about a social revolution by breaking the caste system so that everybody could have the opportunity of self-development. For this, he adopted democratic and constitutional means. His thinking was, therefore, dominated by democratic and constitutional ideologies. He wanted to transform political democracy into a social democracy. He should therefore, be remembered for all times to come, as a great social reformer, a patriot, a vigorous champion of justice, freedom and a great Constitution maker.

NOTES

1. *Evidence Taken Before the Reforms Committee*, vol. I, Calcutta, 1919, pp. 729-39.
2. Dhananjay Keer, *Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 70-1.
3. Ibid, pp. 90-6.
4. *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, vol. XVI, pp. 27-37.
5. B.R. Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables?* Bombay, 1945, pp. 40-1.
6. Vasant Moon, *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, vol. II, Bombay, 1982, p. 504.
7. B.R. Ambedkar, *Poona Pact*, Jalandhar, 1982, p. 63.
8. J.M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, London, 1977, p. 314.
9. B.R. Ambedkar, *Poona Pact*, pp. 70-1.
10. *The Times of India*, 15 August 1936.
11. Dhananjay Keer, op. cit.
12. *Constituent Assembly Debates* (hereafter referred to as *CAD*), vol. XI, p. 973.
13. W.N. Kuber, *Dr Ambedkar: A Critical Study*, New Delhi, 1973, p. 249.
14. *CAD*, vol. VII, p. 40.
15. Ibid., p. 950.
16. B.N. Rau, *India's Constitution in the Making*, Bombay, 1960, pp. 232-53.

8

Ambedkarian Framework of Nation-Building: A Critical Enquiry

K.C. Yadav and S.K. Chahal

The word 'nation' as we understand it today is the product of modern times. Coming from the Latin word 'nation' it simply means an extensive aggregate of persons occupying a definite territory and closely associated with each other by common descent, etc., to form a distinct people, enjoying political unity and independence. Amazingly, despite its clear meaning, the word is often used almost synonymously for such collectivities as state, country, community and culture. For these collectivities have many common features, like sovereign government, geographical boundary, distinct language, particular way of life and so on. But in spite of certain similarities, 'nation' is, technically speaking, absolutely different from all these entities for the reason that all of them lack one thing, that is, particular 'feeling' which distinguishes nation as a unique phenomenon.

Briefly, this particular 'feeling' is national ideology which manifests its identity or existence through race, caste, class, or community. But let us hasten to add here that a race, caste, class or community alone cannot help in the formation of a national ideology or existence. All these things taken together or each one of these individually can help in the formation of a nation only if they/it had independent cultural basis, developed within distinct geographical bounds. This, in other words, means that only an independent cultural process can transform a socio-political collectivity into an independent nation.

Thanks to the modern phenomena like renaissance, reformation, mercantilism, French revolution, colonialism, imperialism, world wars, etc., which took place in the recent past, there was growth of nations in different manners, first in Europe and then in the rest of the world. In India, the process took its roots in the nineteenth century.

II

There had been a long and continuous debate during our freedom movement on the question of the 'Indian Nation'. The Britishers, the then imperial masters, thought or at least pretended to be so thinking, that India was not a nation. Comprising several religions, countless castes and differing cultures and languages, it was a thousand nations, they said. As opposed to the Imperialists' view, the nationalists argued that there were no doubt diversities in India, but there was clearly a strong string of unity running across these diversities which stringed them into one cultural heritage and identity which provided a strong base for the Indian nation. Mahatma Gandhi had built up this thesis at length in his monumental work, the *Hind Swaraj*. An excerpt:

> The English have taught us that we were not a nation before and that it will require centuries before we become a nation. This is without foundation. . . . Our mode of life was the same throughout the country. . . . Ancestors of ours established *Setubandha* (Rameshwar) in the South, Jagan Nath in the East and Haridwar in the North as places of pilgrimage. . . . They fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world. . . . It was after the advent of the railways that we began to believe in distinctions and you are at liberty now to say that it is through the railways that we are beginning to abolish these distinctions.

Many other nationalist leaders thought likewise.

In their anxiety to present a united front against the British imperialism, the nationalists refused to accept anything, no matter howsoever real its existence was, which could go or be used by their opponents against their framework of unity in diversity. As a result, they could not give any space to the contradictions, like 'Muslim separatism', for instance, in their framework of nation-building.

The leftists' framework, which tried to improve upon the above framework on the basis of the experiences from outside, was also wanting to a great measure in taking care of the contradictions, like the regional, communal, caste or cultural divisions, which stood in the way of 'Indian nation'. As a matter of fact they did not take note of them at all. They believed that the struggle was between the colonialism and capitalism on the one side, and the freedom-loving citizenry and the proleteriat on the other. Nothing else existed and hence the challenges to the Indian nation were neither recognized

nor touched. As a result, the contradictions are living as before even today in our society.

There is another framework of the rightists. They believe that India is a nation by all means, for Hinduism, the ancient faith provides a strong cultural basis for unity to our people. Like leftists, they also ignore the presence of the divisive things like caste, community and regional cultures which stand in the way of our people becoming a nation in the true sense of the term.

It is owing to inadequacies of the above frameworks that India today is, to use Naipaul's phrase, 'a land of million mutinies'. There are communal riots, caste conflicts, regional upsurges and many things more. Some people want to walk out of the country itself. Some states want to break away from the union. There are agitations for redrawing up of the administrative maps of India every now and then. There is chaos, confusion, anarchy almost everywhere: integrity, security and well-being of the Indian nation are in jeopardy.

What is the remedy? How can these problems be overcome? How can India shape itself into a strong, united and emotionally integrated nation? We have tried all the available frameworks of nation-building in the past. Sadly, none of these frameworks has proved useful. None seems to be capable of serving the purpose. Is there no hope, then, of getting out of the cul-de-sac? There is one wayout—the Ambedkarian framework. We have not used it so far. Let us give it a trial. Maybe we get an answer from this hitherto neglected framework.

III

For a proper understanding of Ambedkarian framework of nation-building, it is necessary to keep in mind the following things: First, Ambedkar was a Dalit by birth and, therefore, his thinking always remained concentrated on achieving social justice for his down-trodden community. Secondly, he was a Hindu. And despite all the criticism of Hindus and Hinduism that he indulged in, he had in some part of his heart, a sort of warmth for the religion of his forefathers. This was perhaps the reason that he did not renounce Hinduism till the last days of his life, though he had declared in 1930s that he would renounce it. And when he finally renounced it, he went to Buddhism, which based on the fundamental doctrines of Hinduism, like *karma, rebirth,* etc., was not very different from the

mother religion. Thirdly, Ambedkar strategically collaborated with the British for Dalit empowerment, but he never compromised with his nationalist ideology and interest. And finally, he had very powerful intellect. He had the richest possession of academic qualifications among his contemporaries. He was a creative thinker and had his own opinion on almost everything around him. No wonder, then, that he did not accept the so-called well established tranditions, customs and precedents which usually dictate us day in and day out in deciding routine business in life.

This preface would perhaps help us understand many complexities involved in the ensuing discussion. Especially so, when we know that the scholar-statesman treaded, more often than not, a strange, uncommon path and looked at the problems that he confronted with from a highly profond plane.

Let us come to the point. Dr Ambedkar, as was his training, reviewed almost all the frameworks for nation-building available in the country. Amazingly, none of them met his approval. In his opinion India was not only not a nation, but it was not even technically and morally fit to call itself 'the United States of India'. 'We have to go a long way to become even the latter', he said. Which means he differed with the nationalist school in a big way.

Was he, then, nearer to the Imperialist school? Far from it. See, for instance, the following excerpts from one of his writings on the subject:

> I venture to say that there is no country that can rival the Indian Peninsula with respect to the unity of its culture. It has not only a geographical unity, but it has over and above all a deeper and a much more fundamental unity—the indubitable cultural unity that covers the land from end to end.

This shows that Ambedkar believed, like the nationalists, both in 'diversities' as well as 'cultural unity' of India. But that is all. He was, as noted above, not ready to accept the thesis of the nationalists that India was a nation. He gave reasons for that. However, for a proper understanding of the whole issue it seems pertinent to begin with an explanation of the conceptual language that Ambedkar has used in his discourse.

Ambedkar believed that nationality which was central to the study of the problem of nation-building, was a 'social feeling', a 'corporate sentiment of oneness' which made those charged with it feel that they were kith and kin. This feeling, he observed, was a double-edged feeling. For

it is at once a feeling of fellowship for one's own kith and kin and an anti-fellowship for those who are not one's own kith and kin. It is a feeling of 'consciousness of kind' which on the one hand binds together those that have it so strongly that it overrides all differences arising out of social conflicts on social gradation and, on the other, severs them from those who are not of their kind.

It is precisely the feeling of kith-and-kin-like fellowship, he argued, which created nationality. But not always. This would not happen, for instance, where a people did not have the following two things suggested by the French thinker Renana: one, 'common possession of a rich heritage of memories, and two, the actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to preserve together, the will to preserve worthily the undivided heritage which has been handed down'. He agreed with Burke, Mill and Mazzini that religion and culture played an important role in the shaping of the phenomenon. Nationalism, he further argued, could create a state and a cultural home of a nation, if a definite territory which it could occupy was available to it.

In sum, nationalism for Ambedkar in relation to a nation was a 'fundamentally strong feeling of racial unity'; however, in relation to internationalism, it was founded in human brotherhood. There was no place in his scheme of things, for a nationalism being under any circumstance 'a menace to any other community or country'.

IV

Ambedkar saw three main obstacles in the way of India becoming a nation. First was caste—the pernicious institution which not only divided people but also categorized them as high and low, pure and impure, *dvija* and *shudra* and so forth. Worse, it denied millions, the so-called untouchables, the basic rights which constituted citizenship, viz., (1) right to personal liberty, (2) right to personal security, (3) right to hold private property, (4) equality before law, (5) liberty of conscience, (6) freedom of opinion and speech, (7) right of assembly, (8) right of representation in a country's government, and (9) right to hold office under the state. The effect of caste, Ambedkar stressed, was simply devastating:

> Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu's public is his caste. His

responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious. There is no charity to the needy. . . .

The Hindus have committed treason, he remarked in desperation and anger, against their country in the interests of their caste?

Many nationalists did not think that way. They saw nothing wrong in the caste system, especially in its 'distribution of work'. One should do one's traditional job, they said, silently talking of caste contradictions was seen by them as an anti-national activity. It was, according to Ambedkar, a towering stupidity: contractions, divisions and such like things could not be removed by sweeping under the carpet that way. They had to fought and destroyed, for it was only on their graveyard that strong Indian nation could be built. Hence, his thesis relating to annihilation of caste that he advocated most forcefully in 1930s. He suggested the following measures for achieving the aim:

(1) All caste identities (especially related to high caste proud) be destroyed;
(2) Inter-caste marriages and inter-dinings should be encouraged;
(3) Destruction of all caste-supporting scriptures and *shastras* be there; only on text (i.e. *Gita*) as a religions book be accepted;
(4) The doctrines of *karma* and rebirth be discouraged;
(5) The monopoly of Brahmanas over priesthood be vanished;
(6) The representation of lower and backward castes in public and political life be increased;
(7) Caste-boycott, the greatest constrain in inter-caste relations, be declared illegal;
(8) Village-autonomy (where dominant caste establishes its dictatorship) be minimized.
(9) 'One man—one value' be the principle of administrative and democratic set-up; and
(10) Dalits, tribals and backwards should be given protection and constitutional safeguards under the principle of 'special treatment' and 'discriminatory protection' instead of 'equal treatment', etc.

In sum, he said,

there is no doubt in my opinion, that unless you change your social order you can achieve little by way of progress. You cannot mobilize the

community either for defence or for offence. You cannot build anything on the foundation of caste. You cannot build up a nation, you cannot build up a morality.

The second big hurdle was communalism. It may be recalled that Ambedkar did not take communalism in a narrow sense as the nationalists and communists did. He regarded religion necessary for the 'making' of an individual as well as a nation. He castigated the people who denied the presence and identity of the communal collectivities in our society. He believed that the Muslims who had over the years developed a separate identity and a will to retain it as such, were a separate nationality. But not the other minorities, such as Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Neo-Christians, Dalits, Tribals, etc. who had not developed a will to remain separate communal collectivities. They were, as such, he said, very much a part of the Hindu way of life. However, he wanted these minorities to be cared for and given their due. For the deprivation and dispossession could lead to serious consequences—even for Muslims—like estrangement and separation. He exhorted the *svarna* Hindus and nationalists to give up their strange policy of appeasing the unappeasables and ignoring the non-ignorables. Said he:

> The attempts at the solution of the communal problem are either in the nature of a coward's plan to cow tow to the bully or of bully's plan to dictate to the weak. A start is made with a demand for separate electorate for a minority. It is granted. . . . Next, a claim is made for weightage in representation. That is granted. . . . It is followed by a demand for statutory majority over other minorities with the right for the majority to retain separate electorates. This is granted. . . . Nothing can be more absured than this policy of eternal appeasement.

Give the Muslim minority their due, he counselled, but not more. He wanted the same to be done to other minorities—the foundation stones of the Indian nation.

Ambedkar believed, as indicated above, that India was not a nation—not because of its minorities, like Sikhs, Buddhists, Dalits, etc., but because of its majority which was highly communal. This communal majority, he further argued, was worse when in authority. Then it would never give equal treatment to those who do not belong to the community'. Therefore, in the nationalists' demand of rule of majority he saw the establishment of the Divine Right of the majority to rule the minorities according to the wishes of the majority. Secondly, the hurdle in the way of India becoming a nation

could be removed only if the majority behaved well and gave up its looking at any claim for the sharing of power by minorities as communalism and its own monopoly over it as nationalism. Ambedkar strongly advocated that minorities should be given economic security and constitutional remedies of their problems.

The third thing that obstructed the process of nation-building, was regionalism. Ambedkar saw an under-current of parochialism flowing throughout the length and breadth of the whole country. This was a dangerous situation. If states/regions pulled in different directions, the central edifice, he said, would collapse. The Indian nation would die even before its birth. By saying so, Ambedkar was not suggesting some subordinate role for the states/regions. He was for reasonable autonomy to the states/regions with distinct linguistic-cultural identities. He advocated strong centre not as an authoritarian outfit but as a caring and considerate democratic whole of which the states/regions were important parts. He wanted each state/region to be looked after well. For discontented states/regions, he said, could be dangerous for the security, sustenance and well-being of the nation.

Neither nationalists nor others realized the importance of the above points in their frameworks. We have paid, and are still paying, a heavy price for this neglect. We have seen the integrity, and at times even the very existence of the Indian nation, having been perilously hit at many places on this count during the last fifty years. The Indian nation can be safe, secure and strong only through Ambedkarian dispensation.

V

What precisely is the Ambedkarian framework of nation-building then? What is it made of? How does it take care of its inherent social, communal, economic and cultural pluralities, entities and identities, contradictions and interests, dissensions and conflicts to the satisfaction of one and all? What are its strong and weak points?

Ambedkarian framework of Indian nationalism has two distinct bases: (i) religion and (ii) culture. Some scholars in their anxiety to be clear and unambiguous club the two bases together and pass them as one entity—that is 'Hindu culture', for, he has, they say clearly expressed at places that 'Islam and Christianity were dangerous to the Indian nation'. And from here they proceed further and find a

similarity between Savarkar's idea of Hindu nationalism and Ambedkar's idea of nationalism. Their exercise is baseless. They are unfair to Ambedkar, for never did he think that 'Hindu culture could serve as a basis for Indian nationalism. In fact what he thought was the opposite of it: Hinduism was not only not capable of making India a nation, but badly divided into castes which prevented communication and activity in common and a cause of deep spiritual sharing and possession of certain vital properties by one and all could not provide even a workably stable society. What he actually had in mind was the ancient religion—something akin to Buddhism—which stood for social equality and cultural heritage that provided opportunity to finer human values to flower.

There is a world of difference between Ambedkar and Savarkar. As rightly put by Dr. Gopal Guru, 'there can be a comparison made between Savarkar and Jinnah because they both advocated a two-nation theory: Savarkar for a Hindu nation and Jinnah for Pakistan'. Ambedkar differed from Savarkar in a big way. He opposed his Hindu Raj, for he viewed it as the greatest calamity for this country. It was 'a menace', he said, to liberty, equality, fraternity and eventually to democracy.

In sum, what Dr. Ambedkar meant by religious-cultural basis for Indian nationalism was by and large a secular, spiritual and cultural heritage which was as old as the ancient times and as new as today, was undivided and unspoiled by later narrow religious, social and cultural differences and divisions. To make the heritage yield the desired result, it was, howvere, necessary to take care of the above mentioned three problems: (i) the communal problem, (ii) caste problem, and (iii) regional problem. The Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs appeared to be posing no problem to Ambedkar. With a little effort, they could learn to live like Kiths and Kins. The Christians, Parsis etc. also seemed to be standing at a manageable distance. A little effort could bring them into the mainstream. The Muslims were, however, a problem. They had a separate identity. The fear of Hindu majoritarian domination made them live separately for ages. In the modern times, they developed the feeling of nationality. They have also put forth a demand for a separate nation in which Ambedkar saw nothing wrong for being a nationality, they were well within their rights to demand a separate nation. He counselled The Hindus to learn a lesson from this and treat the non-Hindu minorities fairly. They should be given proper share in governance

and other matters. They should have fundamental rights and economic security. They should have adequate constitutional remedies of their problems. This and this alone, said Ambedkar, could create feeling of fellowship, between the majority and minorities and pave the way for making India a nation in the right sense of the term. Besides this, Ambedkar also recommended to do away with caste. Divided into a large number of social collectivities, he observed, our people became islands cut off from each other. Not to speak of inter-marrying with one another, they refrained from inter-dinning and inter-drinking. The Dalits, tribals and some other Backward Castes were treated as outcasts. Ambedkar advocated annihilation of this pernicious institution of inequality which was responsible for the sorry state of affairs.

Ambedkar also urged the Indian state to intervene in this matter by taking each individual, a Brahana or a Dalit, a poor or a rich, in the following manner:

(i) That the individual is an end in himself.
(ii) That the individual has certain inalienable rights which must be guaranteed to him by the constitution.
(iii) That the individual shall not be required to relinquish any of his constitutional rights as a condition precedent to the receipt of a privilege.
(iv) That the state shall not delegate powers to private persons to govern others.

This was not an easy job to do, cautioned Ambedkar—especially so when we do not take—the matter with seriousness that it deserved. To quote his own words:

> The soul of democracy is the doctrine of one man, one value. Unfortunately, democracy has attempted to give effect to this doctrine only so far as the political structure is concerned by adopting the rule of one man, one vote. . . . It has left the economic structure to take the shape given to it by those who are in a position to mould it. They will not allow the poor, dispossessed low caste people to enjoy the fruits of freedom. They will be deprived of their fundamental rights for the fear of starvation, the fear of losing a house, the fear, of losing savings, if any, the fear of being compelled to take children away from school, the fear of having to be a burden on public charity, the fear of having to be buried at public cost are factors too strong to permit a man to stand out for his Fundamental Rights. They will have no use for the most precious thing called liberty. It is true that where the state refrains from intervention what remains is liberty. But this does not dispose of the matter.

One more question remains to be answered. To whom and from whom is this liberty? Obviously, this liberty is liberty to the landlords to increase rents, for capitalists to increase hours of work and reduce rate of wages . . . . What is called liberty from the control of the State is another name for the dictatorship of the private employer.

Political democracy, observed Ambedkar, was meaningless without economic democracy. This could come, he believed, only through economic reconstruction through state socialism. He wanted all land to go to state and agriculture to be a society affair under state control. He wanted India to become an 'industrial country' to facilitate the work of nation-building.

The third constraint—regionalism. Ambedkar has examined this problem in his two scholarly works entitled *Maharastra as a Linguistic State* (1948) and *Thoughts on Linguistic States* (1995). The main thrust of his arguments was to remove the obstacles put up by regional factors and forces in the making of the Indian nation which in brief touched the following four points:

(i) There are many regional, cultural and linguistic diversities and divisions in India, which should be considered while going for nation-building.
(ii) The base of state formation should be linguistic but there should be one uniform official language throughout the country.
(iii) The states should not be given absolute autonomous powers as it could result in the administrative dominance of the dominant community over other communities.
(iv) The principle of 'one state-one language' instead of one language-one state should be followed. Small states he favoured, considering the economic and cultural diversities of unilinguial regions.

These stipulations could, Ambedkar believed, and rightly of course, remove the existing irritants in the nation-making process by taking care of (i) North-South balance, (ii) feelings of regional cultures, (iii) interests of the Dalits, minorities and weaker sections, and (iv) national integration. His panacea for most of the ills was small states: Maharashtra divided into four states (Bombay city, Western, Central and Eastern Maharashtra), U.P. in three (Meerut, Kanpur and Allahabad) Bihar into two (Patna and Ranchi) and M.P. again into two (Northern and Southern M.P.). This division, Ambedkar observed would meet the criticism that the present arrangement consolidated the position of north and disintegrated the south.

Secondly, it would safeguard the interests of the weaker sections. He could not think of a nation state without an official language of its own and proposed Hindi for this purpose. He wanted a strong centre and, therefore, recommended vast powers vested in it. To satisfy the southerns he proposed a second capital for India, somewhere in the midst of the country—at Hyderabad, Secunderabad or Belgaum, for instance.

These arrangements, Ambedkar believed, would give us a strong India capable of taking care of each and every state/region/locality to the satisfaction of their people. No state or people or linguistic group would grow into a nationality in the proposed scheme of things, he said, and threaten the national integrity and existence. Rather they would remain in place and work for national good, honour and safety. That served their interest and gave them peace, happiness and security!

VI

The above discussion, when summarised, gives the following conclusions:

(i) Ambedkar believed that India was not a nation in the pre-independence days. The differences of castes, communities regions, languages, and cultures stood in the way of its becoming even a 'United States of India'.

(ii) The advent of freedom did not make any substantial improvement in the position. It gave political democracy but not economic and social democracy. As a result, the process of nation-building did not progress on the expected lines.

(iii) There was however, no reason to be over pessimistic and give up hope, for there was a strong ground of spiritual and cultural unity in the country. If we could eliminate the contradictions that stood in the way of this unity, India could become a strong, vibrant nation in no time.

Ambedkar has told us in so many words as to how could we do this seemingly difficult job with a little, sincere effort which gives us a framework where every person, collectivity, state or region had an honourable place for itself; and supplies answers to the problems that the Indian nation is facing at present.

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APPENDICES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Face to Face: Ambedkar and Gandhi on Temple-Entry Legislation put Forward by Ranga Iyer (Two Bills, February 1933)

Ambedkar: The one paragraph Bill is a very simple one. Its fair point lies in admitting that this custom is immoral. There is no such admission in the second bill.

Bapu: No, it is there in its preamble.

Ambedkar: But is is not clear. I also think that the two bills do not go together.

Bapu: The one-paragraph Bill is certainly superior to the other. But the other lengthier Bill was brought forward because the first one could not be introduced in the Provincial Legislature. There is no contradiction in the two Bills. In one Bill untouchability ceases to be a disability and the law refuses to accept the argument based on untouchability. As a result of the second Bill, temple authorities are obliged to take steps under certain circumstances. If we can get both the Bill passed the trustees will not be able to put up any kind of obstacle. I take it upon myself to have all the temples opened within one month if we could get both the Bills passed. The *sanatanists* would prefer the second Bill. But speaking as a sincere *sanatanist* I would prefer the first Bill.

Ambedkar: Now the Government will have to issue orders against the *sanatanist* under Section 144 because they would be regarded as interfering with Untouchables' rights.

Bapu: However, I want you now to emphatically proclaim your ideas in very clear words.

*Mahadevbhai's Diary, vide M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, vol. LIII, December 1972, pp. 498-500

Ambedkar: As far as we are concerned, we have no immediate concern other than securing political power . . . and that alone is the solution of our problem.

There is another point of view also. The object of this effort could be that you want the depressed classes to be retained in the Hindu religion, in which case I am inclined to believe that it is not sufficient in the present awakened state of the depressed classes. . . . If I call myself Hindu I am obliged to accept that by birth I belong to a low caste. Hence I think I must ask the Hindus to show me some sacred authority which would rule out this feeling of lowliness. If it cannot be I should say goodbye to Hinduism. I am not going to be satisfied with measures which would merely bring some relief. . . . I don't want to be crushed by your charity.

Bapu: I have nothing to say if you have come with a final decision that you are not going to move your little finger to have this bill passed.

Ambedkar: We have not made any decision. However, I have shown you how my mind is working.

Bapu: I told you that I could have nothing to say if you have already taken a decision.

Ambedkar: We cannot ask the *savarna* Hindus to decide for themselves whether or not we are a part of them. You ought to demonstrate your determination by getting these Bills passed.

Bapu: I am not asking you to do anything. I never wanted the depressed people to go on their knees to the *savarna* Hindus and ask them to get these Bills passed. Unfortunately, the solution of this problem is in the hands of a third power which is in a position to mend or worsen the situation.

Ambedkar: I can set right the thing.

Bapu: That is right. Of course, I agree with you that it does not behove your dignity to approach the Hindus. I take the position—you might remember since I made the speech at the Round Table Conference—that we should atone for this. If you repudiate us and go away I would think that we only deserved it.

Ambedkar: The Bill mentions temple-entry but it makes no mention

of entry into the *sanctum sanctorum*. Will they let a member of the depressed community place flowers on the idol, or will they let him offer a tray containing oblations? Malaviyaji has already declared that question of offering *puja* does not arise.

Bapu: Temple-entry is meant for *puja* if anything. But if the language of the Bill is not right it can be amended and we can say 'entry for the purpose of *puja*'. It seems there has been some misunderstanding somewhere in the case of Malaviyaji. He would not say what you attribute to him. Flowers, sweets or any other offerings from Harijans will surely be accepted. So we two agree on this point that there is no question of your imploring the *savarna* Hindus. When some *savarna* Hindus tell me that Harijans do not want to enter the temples I ask them to throw open the temple doors for the Harijans whether or not they wish to come in. They ought to have the satisfaction that they have done their duty. They ought to discharge the debt which they owe whether the creditor keeps it or throws it into the gutter. But I must say that you ought not to say that you are not a Hindu. In accepting the Poona Pact you accept the position that you are Hindus.

Ambedkar: I have accepted only the political aspect of it.

Bapu: You cannot escape the situation that you are Hindus in spite of your statement to the contrary.

Ambedkar: We ask of you that our silence should not be misconstrued. After that I accept you point.

Bapu: I go one step further. You will not be able to go ahead a single step unless you maintain you position absolutely correct. I regard temple-entry as a spiritual matter through which everything else will bear fruit.

Ambedkar: The Hindu mind does not work in a rational way. They have no objection to the Untouchables touching them on the railway and other public places. Why do they object to it only in the case of temples?

Bapu: We are well caught on this point. I take up the question of temple-entry first of all because these people want to cling to un-touchability in the temples. Many *sanatanist* Hindus say that they would admit Harijans in schools and public places but not temples. I

ask them to grant the Harijans equal status before God. It will raise their status.

Ambedkar: Supposing we are lucky in the case of temple-entry, will they let us fetch water from the wells?

Bapu: Sure. This is bound to follow it. And it is also very easy.

APPENDIX 2

Face to Face: Gandhi and Ambedkar on the Communal Award

Note: Dr. Ambedkar met Gandhiji in the Yeravda Jail on 22 September 1932 and discussed some aspects of the problem relating to the controversial award. Interesting as the discussion is, it is reproduced in full.

Ambedkar: We must accept that in the country there are two groups belonging to two different ideologies and act accordingly and I should get my compensation. I also want that a clear understanding should be arrived at which would recompose me in other aspects also. The decision of the Government gives me seventy-one seats and I feel that is a just, reasonable and definite allocation.

Gandhiji: According to you.

Ambedkar: Over and above that, I get she right to vote and contest elections in the general constituencies. I also have a franchise in the labourers' constituencies. We do realize that you are of immense help to us.

Gandhiji: Not to you personally.

Ambedkar: But I have only one quarrel with you, that is, you work for the so-called national welfare and not for our interests alone. *If you devoted your self entirely to the welfare of the Depressed. Classes, you would then become our hero.* (Italics supplied)

Gandhiji: Very sweet of you.

Ambedkar: I want political power for my community. That is indispensable for our survival. The basis of the agreement should be: I should get what is due to me. I wish to tell the Hindus that I should be assured of my compensation.

* M.K. Gandhi, *The Collected Works*, vol. LI, pp. 458-60.

Gandhiji: You have clarified your position very beautifully. However, I should like to ask you one question. You say that if there is any genuine party among the Depressed Classes it should be given sufficient scope to rise. Therefore, their refusal to accept joint electorates without primary elections is quite reasonable. What I do not understand is why you have not said so far that there should be separate election of this kind. I feel from whatever study I have made of the subject that if I accept the primary election, the letter of my vow is not violated. I, therefore, accept the clause of primary election.

There would be one election, i.e. of the primary nature by the Harijan voters only. The other would be by the joint electorate. I have to safeguard without any discrimination not the interest of one group alone but the Depressed Classes as a whole. *I want to serve the Untouchables. That is why I am not at all angry with you. When you use derogatory and angry words for me, I tell myself that I deserved that. I will not get angry even if you spit on my face, I say this with God as witness. I know that you have drunk deep of the poisoned cup.* (emphasis added). Hence I make a claim which seems astounding to you. You are born an Untouchable but I am an Untouchable by adoption. And as a new convert I feel more for the welfare of the community than those who are already there. At the moment, I have before my eyes the dumb Untouchables—unapproachables and unseeables—of south India. I am scrutinizing the scheme to see how these people will be affected by it. You will, of course, say why I should worry about that. All of you will either accept Christianity or Islam. I say that you may do whatever you like after my body falls. What I say is that if the panel system is good for the Depressed Classes it should be good for the entire electorate. I do not like it from the beginning that the community should be divided into two groups. *I will raze to the ground the fort of Sanatanists with dynamite if all the Untouchables are one and united. I want that the entire touchable community should unitedly rebel against the Sanatanists.* (emphasis added). You should not worry about the number as long as the appointing power is in your hands. I am a lifelong democrat. The whole world will agree that I was the foremost among the democrats after my ashes are scattered in the air or if that does not happen, after they are immersed in the Ganga.

I do not say this out of pride but tell the truth with humility. I learnt the lesson of democracy at the tender age of 12. I quarrelled with my mother for treating the domestic sweeper as an Untouch-

able. That day I saw God in the form of a Bhangi. You spoke the truth when you said that the welfare of the Untouchables is dearer to you than my own life. Now be honest and stick to it. You should not care for my life. But do not be false to Harijans. My work will not die with me. I have asked my son to convey my message to the Conference. In, that, I have said that I should not be tempted to foresake the interests of the Harijans in order to save my life. I am sure that if I die that my son will definitely follow me. Not only he, but many others also will lay down their lives, for I do not have only one son, I have thousands. He would not be my worthy son if he did not lay down his life for the honour of Hinduism. Without eradicating untouchability root and branch the honour of Hinduism cannot be served. That can only happen when Untouchables are treated on par with caste Hindus in every respect. A person who is regarded as 'unseeable' today should also have the opportunity to become the Viceroy of India. I had said, in the first political speech I made on coming to India that I would like to make a Bhangi the President of the Congress.

So I appeal to you not to haggle. Do not bring to me something which is so bad that I would not even like the look of it. Bring to me some nice present which would inspire life into a person who is willingly counting death. However, you will do that only if you are convinced that my co-operation has some value.

APPENDIX 3

Gandhi's Perception of Some Questions Relating to Dalits

Note: A Dalit (Ambedkarite) posed 10 questions to Gandhiji to clarify his stand on various questions relating to them. Gandhiji found the questions good and answered them in the *Harijan* dated 20 April 1934.

1. Mahatamaji, why are you so much interested in our cause?
2. If all religions are one in your consideration, are the Christians not entitled to combat untouchability?
3. In what way will our people be benefited if untouchability is removed?
4. Why should we enter Hindu temples?
5. Did not the Hindu deities that were incarnated oppress us?
6. Arya and un-Arya are the divisions created for us. What harm is there if we remain separated?
7. Even in Untouchables there are many sub-castes. What do you propose to do with this problem?
8. Once you said that *Swaraj* can be attained the day untouchability is removed. Is this present propaganda directed to that end?
9. If so, are you going to give equivalent rights with other Hindus to our crores of Untouchables?
10. Instead of opening temples and eradicating untouchability, suffice it if you make provision for our livelihood.

They are good questions, My answers are:

1. I am interested in the Harijan cause for the sake of purifying myself of the taint of untouchability and doing penance for the sin; and, being jealous of the reputation of the faith I profess, I am anxious that fellow members of the faith should also purge themselves of the same.

2. Not only are the Christians entitled, but it is their duty, to combat untouchability in their own midst. But if the question is that Christians should combat untouchability in Hinduism, my answer is that they simply cannot do it because Untouchables of Hinduism should not be Untouchables to Christians. The anti-untouchability movement means weaning Hindus from their error. This cannot be effectively done by non-Hindus, even as Hindus cannot bring about religious reform among Christians or Mussalamans. If the question means that Christians should combat untouchability among Hindus by converting Untouchables to Christianity, they do not advance the cause in any shape or form, the cause being reformation among caste Hindus. If the latter repented of their sin, the Harijans would be delivered from the yoke of untouchability in a moment. Conversion can never do it. I can add only to prevailing bitterness and introduce a disturbing factor in a situation which is already had but which, owing to the work of *Harijan Sevak Sangh* and other movements of internal reform in Hinduism, is steadily improving, untouchability being daily undermined.
3. In many ways, I enumerate some below:
   i. Caste Hindus will be purified by the repentance.
   ii. The economic, moral, social and political status of Harijans will be improved by the removal of artificial barrier which has been stunting their growth all along.
   iii. Untouchability that is imposed on Untouchables is such a poison that it has overtaken those living within its zone. And, therefore, Hindus, Christians, Mussalamans and others have become Untouchables to one another. Real removal of untouchability must bring us all together and thus promote a heart-unity of the different communities in India.
   iv. Removal of untouchability with all its implications must mean a great contribution to the promotion of universal brotherhood.
4. Harijans need not enter Hindu temples, if they don not wish. But yhey should, if they have faith in them. The temple-entry movement has for its object, not the entering by Harijans into Hindu temples, but the opening of these temples to all those Harijans who wish to enter them for worship. In other words, it is movement of repentance and change of heart in caste Hindus.

5. I should be sorry if I found that the Hindu deities oppressed Harijans, and if they did, they were certainly not beneficent deities, but evil ones to be shunned.
6. He would be a bold man who is able to say today with any degree of success who is Arya and who is un-Arya. Historians tell us that a blending of the two took place centuries ago. If now a sharp division is attempted, it will harm not only Hindus, both caste and outcaste, but it will harm the whole of India and, by implication, the whole of humanity.
7. When untouchability practised by caste Hindus is radically removed, its offshoot among Untouchables will automatically wither.
8. I should assert the statement again. But the present propaganda is directed only to the purification of caste Hindus and, therefore, of Hindus. And when that purification is demonstrably attained, not only *Swaraj* but many other desirable results will follow, as day follows night. The word *Swaraj* as here used does not mean a mere legal status but something far better and more lasting. I would call it an organic status evolved from within.
9. Whatever meaning may be given to the word *Swaraj*, removal of untouchability will be a fraud if it does not carry with it the enjoyment of these Hindus of precisely the same rights as the other Hindus and the other communities may enjoy under it.
10. It is beyond me, a single, poor mortal, to make provision for the livelihood of millions. That can only be achieved by their whole effort and God's grace. But, if temples are flung open to Harijans and untouchability is eradicated, the dead weight that is grinding them down will have lifted, and they will have an equal opportunity with the rest of their fellow-men for earning an honest livelihood.

APPENDIX 4

Economic Democracy is Our Ideal: Dr Ambedkar on the Directive Principles

Mr Vice-President, I see that there is a great deal of misunderstanding as to the real provisions in the Constitution in the minds of those members of the House who are interested in this kind of directive principles. It is quite possible that the misunderstanding or rather inadequate understanding is due to the fact that I myself in my opening speech in support of the motion that I made, did not refer to this aspect of the question. That was because not that I did not wish to place this matter before the House in a clear-cut fashion, but my speech had already become so large that I did not venture to make it more tiresome than I had already done; but I think it is desirable that I should take a few minutes of the House in order to explain what I regard as the fundamental position taken in the Constitution. As I stated, our Constitution as a piece of mechanism lays down what is called parliamentary democracy. By parliamentary democracy we mean 'one man, one vote'. We also mean that every Government shall be on the anvil, both in its daily affairs and also at the end of a certain period when the voters and the electorate will be given an opportunity to assess the work done 'by the Government. The reason why we have established political democracy in this Constitution is because we do not want to instal by any means whatsoever a perpetual dictatorship of any particular body of people. While we have established political democracy it is also the desire that we should lay down as our ideal economic democracy. We do not want merely to lay down a mechanism to enable people to come and capture power.

The Constitution also wishes to lay down an ideal before those who would be forming the Government. That ideal is economic democracy, whereby, so far as I am concerned, I understand to mean,

*Speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly on 17 November, 1948.

'one man, one vote'. The question is: Have we got any fixed idea as to how we should bring about economic democracy? There are various ways in which people believe that economic democracy can be brought about; there are those who believe in individualism as the best form of economic democracy; there are those who believe in having a socialistic State as the best form of economic democracy; there are those who believe in the communistic idea as the most perfect form of economic democracy. Now having regard to the fact that there are various ways by which economic democracy may be brought about, we have deliberately introduced in the language that we have used, in the directive principles, something which is not fixed or rigid. We have left enough room for people of different ways of thinking, with regard to the reaching of the ideal of economic democracy, to strive in their own way, to persuade the electorate that it is the best way of reaching economic democracy, the fullest opportunity to act in the way in which they want to act.

Sir, that is the reason why the language of the articles in Part IV is left in the manner in which this Drafting Committee thought it best to leave it. It is no use giving a fixed rigid form to something which is not rigid, which is fundamentally changing and must, having regard to the circumstances and the times, keep on changing. It is, therefore, no use saying that the directive principles have no value. In my judgement, the directive principles have a great value, for they lay down that our ideal is economic democracy. Because we did not want merely a parliamentary form of Government to be instituted through the various mechanisms provided in the Constitution, without any direction as to what our economic ideal, as to what our social order ought to be, we deliberately included the Directive Principles in our Constitution. I think, if the friends who are agitated over this question bear in mind what I have said just now that our object in framing this Constitution is really two-fold:

i. to lay down the form of political democracy, and
ii. to lay down that our ideal is economic democracy and also to prescribe that every Government whatever it is in power, shall strive to bring about economic democracy, much of the misunderstanding under which most members are labouring will disappear.

My friend Mr Tyagi made an appeal to me to remove the word 'strive' and phrases like that. I think he has misunderstood why we

have used the word 'strive'. The word 'strive' which occurs in the Draft Constitution, in my judgement, is very important. We have used it because our intention is that even when there are circumstances which prevent the Government or which stand in the way of the Government giving effect to these Directive Principles, they shall, even under hand and unpropitious circumstances, always strive in the fulfilment of these directives. That is why we have used the word strive. Otherwise, it would be open for any Government to say that the circumstances are so bad, that the finances are so inadequate that we cannot even make an effort in the direction in which the Constitution asks us to go. I think that my friend Mr Tyagi will see that the word 'strive' in this context is of great importance and it would be very wrong to delete it.

As to the rest of amendments, I am afraid I have to oppose them.

APPENDIX 5

Essentials of Dr Ambedkar's Thinking: Buddhism and Communism

I am sorry that having come to Nepal to attend the Conference, I have not been able to participate in its proceedings in the way in which a delegate ought to participate. But I am sure, most of the delegates are aware that although I am here, I am physically a very ill man and I am quite unable to bear the stress and strain of the Conference proceedings. It is, therefore, not out of any disrespect for the Conference that I have been usually absent, it is because of my personal condition that I could not do justice to the task of the Conference. It is perhaps because of my absence from the Conference that I was asked by way of compensation to address you this afternoon. In consented to do that, but even here, there have been surprises flung on me. I had not enough notice that I was to speak here. And when I was asked what subject I would speak on, I mentioned the subject *Ahimsa in Buddhism*. But I find that a large majority of the people attending this Conference are desirous that I should speak on *Buddhism and Communism*, a subject to which I, in a very passing sentence, referred at the first general meeting.

I am quite prepared to agree to the suggestion of the change of subject, although, I must say that I am not quite, on the spur of the moment, prepared to deal with such a large, enormous, and if I may say so, a very massive subject. It is a subject which has had half the world in grips, and I find that it has held also in its grip a large number of the student population, even of the Buddhist countries. I look upon the later aspect of the matter with grave concern. If the younger generation of the Buddhist countries are not able to appreciate that Buddhism supplies a way of life which is better than what is supplied by the Communist way of life, Buddhism is

*Speech at the International Buddhist Conference held at Kathmandu, Nepal, November 1956.

doomed. It cannot last beyond a generation or two. It is, therefore, quite necessary for those who believe in the Buddhism to tackle the younger generation, and to tell them whether Buddhism can be a substitute for Communism. It is only then that Buddhism can hope to survive. We must all remember that today a large majority of the people in Europe and large majority of the youngsters in Asia look upon Karl Marx as the only prophet who should be worshipped. And they regard the largest of the Buddhist *Sangha* as nothing but the yellow peril. That is an indication which the Bhikkhus must take up, must understand, to reform themselves in order that they could be compared with Karl Marx. And Buddhism could compete with it.

Now, with this introduction, I propose to give you a few salient points in Buddhism and in Marxism or Communism in order to show you where the similarity of ideals lies and where the differences arise between Buddhism and Marxism. And thirdly, whether the Buddhist way of life of reaching the goal is a lasting one, or whether the Communist way of bringing about the goal is the lasting one. Because there is no use in pursuing a certain path, if that path is not going to be a lasting path, if it is going to lead you to jungle, if it going to lead you to anarchy, there is no use pursuing it. But, if you are assured that the path that you are asked to follow is slow, may be devious yet if it ultimately makes your reach a safe, sound ground, so that the ideals you are pursuing are there to help you, to mould your life permanently it is much better, in my judgement, to follow the slower path, and the devious path rather than to rush up and to take what we call short cuts. Short cuts in life are always dangerous, very dangerous.

Now let me go the the subject. What is the theory of Communism? What does it start with? Communism starts with the theory that there is exploitation in the world, that the poor are exploited by the rich because of the property that they hold, and they enslave the masses, that enslavement results in suffering, sorrow, and poverty. That is the starting point of Karl Marx. He uses the word 'exploitation'. What is the remedy that Karl Marx provides? The remedy that Karl Marx provides is that in order to prevent poverty and the suffering of one class it is necessary to remove private property. Nobody should possess private property because it is the private owner who appropriates or misappropriates, to use the technical language of Karl Marx, the surplus value, which the workers produce. The worker does not get the surplus value which he produces. It is appropriated

by the other. Karl Marx asked the question why should the owner misappropriate the surplus value which is produced by the efforts of the working man? His answer is that the only owner is the State. And it is because of this that Marx propounded the theoory that there must be the dictatorship of the proletariat. That is the third proposition that Marx enunciated, that government must be by the exploited classes and not by the exploiting classes, that is what is meant by the dictatorship of the proletariat. These are the fundamental propositions in Karl Marx, which are the basis of Communism in Russia. They have undoubtedly been expanded. But these are the fundamental propositions.

Now let me, for a moment, go to Buddhism and see what the Buddha had to say about the points made out by Karl Marx. As I told you, Karl Marx begins with what is called exploitation of the poor. What does the Buddha say? How does he begin? What is the foundation on which he has raised the structure of his religion? The Buddha, too, 2000 or at any rate 2400 years ago, said exactly the same thing. He said, 'There is "*Dukkha*" in the world.' He did not use the word, 'exploitation' but he did lay the foundation of his religion on what he called '*Dukkha*'. I think there are lots of places in the Buddhist literature where the Buddha has used the word '*Dukkha*' in the sense of poverty. Therefore, so far as the foundation is concerned, there is really no difference at all.

It is unnecessary for the Buddhist people to go to Karl Marx to get the foundation. That foundation is already there, well laid. It is here that the Buddha begins his first sermon the *Dhamma Chakra Pravartana Sutta*. Therefore, to those who are attracted by Karl Marx, I say, study the *Dhamma Chakra Pravartana Sutta* find out what the Buddha says. And you will find sufficient satisfaction on this question. The Buddha did not lay the foundation of his religion either on God, or on soul or anything supernatural like these. He laid His finger on the fact of life—people are living in suffering. Therefore, so far as Marxism or Communism is concerned, Buddhism has enough of it. And the Buddha said that 2400 years before Marx was born.

With regard to the question of property, you will again find some very close affinity to the doctrine of the Buddha and the doctrine preached by Karl Marx. Karl Marx said that in order to prevent exploitation, the State must own the instruments of production, that is property. Land must belong to the State, industry must belong to the State, so that no private owner might intervene and rob the

worker of the profits of his labour. That is what Marx said.

Now let us go to the *Sangha*, the *Buddhist Sangha*, and examine the rules of life that the Buddha laid down for the monks. What are the rules that the Buddha laid-down? Well, the Buddha said that no monk shall have private property. And although there might be a few lapses here and there and I have noticed that in some countries the monks own some property, yet in the large majority of cases the monks have no property at all. In fact the Buddhist rules for the *Sangha* are far more severe than any rules that the Communists have made in Russia. I take it, as a mute subject, nobody has yet discussed it and come to any conclusion.

What object did the Buddha have in forming the *Sangha*? Why did he do it? Going back a little into the history, when the Buddha was engaged in propagating His religion, those whom we today call the *Parivrajakas* were existing there long before the Buddha was born. The word *Parivrajaka* means a displaced person, a person who has lost his home. Probably during the Aryan period the different tribes of the Aryans were warring against one another as all tribal people do. Some broken tribes left, lost their moorings and were wandering about. And it is those wanderers that were called *Parivrajakas*. The great service that the Buddha did to these *Parivrajakas* was to organize them into a body, to give them rules of life-those that are contained in the *Vinayapitaka*. In the rule, the *Bhikkhu* is not allowed to have property. The *Bhikkhu* is allowed to have only seven things, a razor, a *lota* for getting water, a *Bhikshapatra*, three *Chevaras* and the needle for sewing things. Well, I want to know if the essence of Communism is to deny the private property, can there be any greater and more severe rules as regards private property than is to be found in the *Vinayapitaka*? I do not find one. Therefore, if any people or any youngsters are attracted by the rule contained in the Communist system of rules that there shall be no private property, they can find it here. The only question is, to what extent can this rule of denial of private property be applied to society as a whole? That is a matter of expediency, time, circumstances and development of human society. But so far as theory is concerned, whether there is anything wrong in abolishing private property, Buddhism will not stand in the way of anybody who wants to do it, because it has already made this condition in the organization of the *Buddhist Sangha*.

Now we come to another aspect of the matter, and that aspect is—what are the ways and means which Karl Marx or the Communists

wish to adopt in order to bring about Communism? That is the important question. The means that the Communists wish to adopt, in order to bring about communism (by which I mean the recognition of *Dukkha*, the abolition of property), is violence and killing of the opposed. There lies the fundamental difference between the Buddha and Karl Marx. The Buddha's means of persuading people to adopt the principles are by persuasion, by moral teaching and by love..He wants to conquer the opponent by inculcating in his the doctrine that love and not power can conquer anything. That is where the fundamental difference lies, that the Buddha would not allow violence, and the Communists do. No doubt the Communists get quick results because when you adopt the means of annihilating men, they do not remain to oppose you.

You go on with your ideology, you go on with your way of doing things. The Buddha's way, as I said, is a long way. Perhaps some people may say, a tedious way. But I have no doubt about it that it is the surest way.

There are two or three questions which I have always asked my Communists friends to answer and which, I must frankly say, they have not been able to answer. They establish by means of violence what they call the dictatorship of the proletariat. They deprive all people who have property or political rights. They cannot have representation in the legislation, they cannot have right to vote, they must remain what they call second grade subjects of the State, the ruled not sharing authority or power. When I asked them, 'Do you agree that dictatorship is a good method of governing people?' they say, 'No, we don't like dictatorship.' Then we say,'How do you allow it?' But they say,'This is an interim period in which dictatorship must be there.'You proceed further and ask them, 'What is the duration of this interim period? How long? Twenty years? Forty years? Fifty years?' No answer. They only repeat that the proletarian dictatorship will vanish, somehow, automatically.

Very well, let us take the thing as it is that dictatorship will vanish. Well, I ask a question,'What will happen when dictatorship disappears? What will take its place? Will man not need Government of some sort?' They have no answer.

Then we go back to the Buddha and ask this question in relation to the *Dhamma*. What does he say? The greatest thing that the Buddha has done is to tell the world that the world cannot be reformed except by the reformation of the mind of the man, and the

mind of the world. If the mind is changed, if the mind accepts the Communist system and loves it loyally and carries it out, it is a permanent thing; it does not require a soldier or a police officer to keep a man in order. Why? The answer is: The Buddha has energized you and your conscience itself is acting as a sentinel in order to keep you on your path. There is no trouble when the mind is converted and the thing is permanent.

The Communist system is based on force. Supposing tomorrow the dictatorship in Russia fails, and we see signs of its failure, what would happen? I would really like to know what happen to the Communist system. As I see it, there would be bloody warfare among the Russian people for appropriating the property of the State. That would be the consequence of it. Why? Because they have not accepted the Communist system voluntarily. They are obeying it because they are afraid of being hanged. Such a system can take no roots, and, therefore, in my judgement, unless the Communists are able to answer these questions. What would happen to their system? When force disappears there is no use pursuing it. Because, if the mind is not converted, force will always be necessary, and this is what I want to say in conclusion, that one of the greatest things I find in Buddhism is that its system is a democratic system. The Buddha told the Vajjis when the Prime Minister of Ajata Satru went to tell the Buddha, that Ajata Satru wants to conquer the Vajjis. He says, 'the King won't be able to do it as long as the Vajjis follow their ways of their age-old system'. The Buddha for unknown reasons did not explain in plain terms what He meant. But there is no doubt about it that what He was referring to was the democratic and republican form of Government, which the Vajjis had. He said: So long as the Vajjis were following their system, they would be unconquered. The Buddha, of course, was a great democrat.

There, I say, and may I say so if the President will allow me, I have been a student of politics; I was a Professor of Economics, and I have spent a great deal of time in studying Karl Marx, Communism and all that, and I have also spent a good deal of time in studying the Buddha's *Dhamma*.

Buddhism and Christianity. So far as the outlook, he dared not say that the Buddhism copied Christianity but he would not admit that Christians copied Buddhism. There is so much of it, I think time has turned and we must now copy some of the ways of the Christians in order to propagate our religion among the Buddhist people. They

must be made aware, every day and all the time, that the Buddha's *Dhamma* is there, standing by them like a policeman to guard lest they should go in a very decadent state. Even now I find that even in the Buddhist countries, its condition is very decadent. But its influence is existing. There is no doubt about it.

I wanted to tell you one very interesting epilogue which I saw in Burma. I went to Burma; I was called for the Conference and they took me to show how they were going to reconstruct the villages. I was very happy. I went with the Committee which had planned to reform the village. Their streets as usual were crooked, bend here and bend there; nothing systematic. So the Committee put down iron pillars and lined ropes that this street must go this way. In good many cases I found that the lines drawn by the Committee went across a piece of land which was owned by a private individual. When I went and saw and I asked them, 'How are they going to manage? Have you got money to pay for the property that you are going to take?' They said,'Nobody wants money.' Everybody said, 'If you want it, take it.' Why is this? Why in my country there would have been bloodshed if you took a little piece of land from somebody without giving him compensation? But there it is, why? Why were the Burmese so free with their property? Why did they not care for it? It is because the Buddha has taught '*sarbam anityam*'. Everything, you see, is impermanent. Why fight for impermanent things? It is all right if you want the land, take it.

Now ladies and gentlemen, I do no think I can continue any further, nor is it necessary for me to do that.

I just wanted to give you a point of view from which to look at. Do not be allured by communist success. I am quite confident that if we all become one-tenth as enlightened as the Buddha was, we can bring about the same result by the methods of love, of justice and good will.

Thank you very much.

APPENDIX 6

Remove Contradictions in the National Life: Dr Ambedkar's Warning

Looking back on the work of the Constituent Assembly it will now be two years, eleven months and seventeen days since it first met on the 9th of December, 1946. During this period the Constituent Assembly has altogether held eleven sessions. Out of these eleven sessions, the first six were spent in passing the Objectives, Resolution and the consideration of the Reports of Committees on Fundamental Rights, Union Constitution, on Union Powers, on Provincial Constitution, on Minorities and on the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes. The seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth and the eleventh sessions were devoted to the consideration of the Draft Constitution. These eleven sessions of the Constituent Assembly have consumed 165 days. Out of these, the Assembly spent 114 days for the consideration of the Draft Constitution. Coming to the Drafting Committee, it was elected by the Constituent Assembly on 29th August 1947. It held its first meeting on the 30th August. Since August 30th it sat for 141 days during which it was engaged in the preparation of the Draft Constitution. The Draft Constitution, as prepared by the Constitutional Adviser as a text for the Drafting Committee to work upon, consisted of 243 Articles and 13 Schedules. The first Draft Constitution as presented by the Drafting Committee to the Constituent Assembly contained 315 Articles and 8 Schedules. At the end of the consideration stage, the number of Articles in the Draft Constitution increased to 386. In its final form, the Draft Constitution contains 395 Articles and 8 Schedules. The total number of amendments to the Draft Constitution tabled was approximately 7,635. Of them, the total number of amendments actually moved in the house were 2,473.

*Speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly of India, on the eve of the adoption of the Constitution, 25 November 1949.

I mention these facts because at one stage it was being said that the Assembly had taken too long a time to finish its work, that it was going on leisurely and wasting public money. It was said to be a case of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning. Is there any justification for this complaint? Let us note the time consumed by Constituent Assemblies in other countries appointed for framing their Constitutions. To take a few illustrations. The American Convention met on May 25th, 1787 and completed its work on September 17, 1787, i.e. within four months. The Constitutional convention of Canada met on the 10th October 1864 and the Constitution was passed into law in March 1867 involving a period of two years and five months. The Australian Constitutional Convention assembled in March 1891 and the Constitution became law on the 9th July 1900, consuming a period of nine years. The South African Convention met in October 1908 and the Constitution became law on the 20th September 1909 involving one year's labour. It is true that we have taken more time than what the American or South African Conventions did. But we have not taken more time than the Canadian Convention and much less than the Australian Convention. In making comparisons on the basis of time consumed two things must be remembered. One is that Constitutions of America, Canada, South Africa and Australia are much smaller than ours. Our Constitution, as I said, contains 395 Articles while American has just seven Articles, the first four of which are divided into sections which total up to 21, the Canadian has 147, Australian 128 and South African 153 sections. The second thing to be remembered is that the makers of the Constitutions of America, Canada, Australia and South Africa did not have to face the problem of amendments. They were passed as moved. On the other hand, this Constitutent Assembly had to deal with as many as 2,473 amendments. Having regard to these facts the charge of dilatoriness seems to me quite unfounded and this Assembly may well congratulate itself for having accomplished so formidable a task in so short a time.

Turning to the quality of the work done by the Drafting Committee, Mr. Naziruddin Ahmed felt it his duty to condemn it outright. In his opinion, the work done by the Drafting Committee is not only not worthy of commendation, but is positively below par. Everybody has a right to have his opinion about the work done by the Drafting Committee and Mr. Naziruddin is welcome to have his own. Mr. Naziruddin Ahmed thinks of himself as a man of greater talents than any member of the Drafting Committee. The Drafting

Committee does not wish to challenge his claim. On the other hand, the Drafting Committee would have welcomed him in their midst if the Assembly had thought him worthy of being appointed to it.

If he has had no place in the making of the Constitution it is certainly not the fault of the Drafting Committee.

Mr. Naziruddin Ahmed has coined a new name for the Drafting Committee evidently to show his contempt for it. He calls it a Drifting Committee. Mr Naziruddin must no doubt be pleased with his hit. But he evidently does not know that there is a difference between drift without mastery and drift with mastery. If the Drafting Committee was drifting, it was never without mastery over the situation. It was not merely angling with the off chance of catching a fish. It was searching in known waters to find the fish it was after. To be in search of something better is not the same as drifting. Although Mr. Naziruddin Ahmed did not mean it as a compliment to the Drafting Committee, I take it as a compliment to the Drafting Committee. The Drafting Committee would have been guilty of gross dereliction of duty and of a false sense of dignity if it had not shown the honesty and the courage to withdraw the amendments which it thought faulty and substitute what it thought was better. If it is a mistake, I am glad the Drafting Committee did not fight shy of admitting such mistakes and coming forward to correct them.

I am glad to find that with the exception of a solitary member, there is a general consensus of appreciation from members of the Constituent Assembly of the work done by the Drafting Committee. I am sure the Drafting Committee feels happy to find this spontaneous recognition of its labours expressed in such generous terms. As to the compliments that have been showered upon me both by the members of Assembly as well as by my colleagues of the Drafting Committee. I feel so overwhelmed that I cannot find adequate words to express fully my gratitude to them. I came into the Constituent Assembly with no greater aspiration than to safeguard the interests of the Scheduled Castes. I had not the remotest idea that I would be called upon to undertake more responsible functions. I was therefore greatly surprised when the Assembly elected me to the Drafting Committee. I was more than surprised when the Drafting Committee elected me to be its Chairman. There were in the Drafting Committee men bigger, better and more competent than myself, such as my friend Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer. I am grateful to the Constituent Assembly and the Drafting Committee for reposing in me so much

trust and confidence and to have chosen me as their instrument and given me this opportunity of serving the country.

The credit that is given to me does not really belong to me. It belongs partly to Sir B.N. Rau, the Constitutional Adviser to the Constituent Assembly who prepared a rough draft of the Constitution for the consideration of the Drafting Committee. A part of the credit must go to the members of the Drafting Committee who, as I have said, have sat for 141 days and without whose ingenuity to devise new formulae and capacity to tolerate and to accommodate different points of view. The task of framing the Constitution could not have come to so successful a conclusion. Much greater share of the credit must go to Mr. S.N. Mukerjee, the Chief Draftsman of the Constitution. His ability to put the most intricate proposals in the simplest and clearest legal form can rarely be equalled, nor his capacity for hard work. He has been an acquisition to the Assembly. Without his help, this Assembly would have taken many more years to finalise the Constitution. I must not omit to mention the members of the staff working under Mr. Mukerjee. For, I know how hard they have worked and how long they have toiled sometimes even beyond midnight. I want to thank them all for their effort and their co-operation.

The task of the Drafting Committee would have been a very difficult one if this Constituent Assembly had been merely a motely crowd, a tassellated pavement without cement, a black stone here and a white stone there, in which each member or each group was a law unto itself. There would have been nothing but chaos. This possibility of chaos was reduced to nil by the existence of the Congress party inside the Assembly which brought into its proceedings a sense of order and discipline. It is because of the discipline of the Congress Party that the Drafting Committee was able to pilot the Constitution in the Assembly with the sure knowledge as to the fate of each Article and each amendment. The Congress Party is, therefore, entitled to all the credit for the smooth sailing of the Draft Constitution in the Assembly.

The proceedings of this Constituent Assembly would have been very dull if all members had yielded to the rule of party discipline. Party discipline, in all its rigidity would have converted this Assembly into a gathering of yesmen. Fortunately, there were rebels. They were Mr. Kamath, Dr. P.S. Deshmukh, Mr. Sidwa, Prof. Saxena and Pandit Thakurdas Bhargava. Along with them were Prof. K.T. Shah

and Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru. The points they raised were mostly ideological. That I was not prepared to accept their suggestions, does not diminish the value of their suggestions no lessen the service they have rendered to the Assembly in enlivening its proceedings. I am grateful to them. But for them, I would not have had the opportunity which I got for expounding the principles underlying the Constitution which was more important than the mere mechanical work of passing the Constitution.*

Finally I must thank you Mr. President for the way in which you have conducted the proceedings of this Assembly. The courtesy and the consideration which you have shown to the members of the Assembly can never be forgotten by those who have taken part in the proceeding of this Assembly. There were occasions when the amendments of the Drafting Committee were sought to be barred on grounds purely technical in their very nature. There were very anxious moments for me. I am, therefore, specially grateful to you for not permitting legalism to defeat the work of constitution-making.

As much defence as could be offered to the Constitution has been offered by my friends like Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar and Mr. T.T. Krishnamachari.

I shall not therefore enter into the merits of the Constitution. However good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out to be bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot. The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution. The Constitution can provide only the organs of State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the State depend are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics. Who can say how the people of India and their parties will behave? Will they uphold constitutional methods of achieving their purposes or will they prefer revolutionary methods of achieving them? If they adopt

* No better explanation than this can be supplied to the points raised by Arun Shourie on this count. The humility of Dr. Ambedkar should not be misunderstood, as Shourie does, that he played no role in the constitution-making!

the revolutionary methods, however good the Constitution is, it requires no prophet to say that it will fail. It is, therefore, futile to pass any judgement upon the Constitution without reference to the part which the people of India and their parties are likely to play.

The condemnation of the Constitution largely comes from two quarters, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. Why do they condemn Constitution? Is it because it is really a bad Constitution? Not, at all. Communist Party wants a Constitution based upon the principle of the Dictatorship of Proletariate. They condemn the Constitution because it is based upon Parliamentary democracy. The Socialists want two things. The first thing they want is that if they come in power, the Constitution must give them the freedom to nationalize or socialize all private property without payment of compensation. The second thing that the Socialists want is that the Fundamental Rights mentioned in the Constitution must be absolute and without any limitations so that if their Party fails to come into power, they would have the unfettered freedom not merely to criticize but also to overthrow the state.

There are the main grounds on which the Constitution is being condemned, I do not say that the principle of Parliamentary democracy is the only ideal form of political democracy. I do not say that the principle of no acquisition of private property without compensation is so sacrosant that there can be no departure from it. I do not say that Fundamental Rights can never be absolute and limitations set upon them can never be lifted. What I do say is that the principles embodied in the Constitution are the views of the present generation or if you think this to be an over-statement, I say they are the views of the members of the Constituent Assembly. Why blame the Drafting Committee for embodying them in the Constitution? I say why blame even the members of the Constituent Assembly? Jefferson, the great American statesman who played so great a part in the making of the American Constitution, has expressed some very weighty views which makers of Constitution can never afford to ignore. In one place, he has said:

> We may consider each generation as a distinct nation, with a right, by the will of the majority to bind themselve, but none to bind the succeeding generation, more than the inhabitants of another country.

In another place, he has said:

> The idea that institutions established for the use of the nation cannot be

touched or modified, even to make them answer their end, because of rights gratuitously supposed in those employed to manage them in the trust for the public, may perhaps be a salutary provision against the abuses of a monarch, but is most absurd against the nation itself. Yet our lawyers and priests generally inculcate this doctrine, and suppose that preceding generations held the earth more freely than we do: had a right to impose laws on us unalterable by ourselves, and that we in the like manner, can make laws and impose burdens on future generations, which they will have no right to alter; in fine, that the earth belongs to the dead and not the living.

I admit that what Jefferson has said is not merely true, but is absolutely true. There can be no question about it. Had the Constituent Assembly departed from this principle laid down by Jefferson. It would certainly be liable to blame even to condemnation. But I ask, has it? Quite the contrary. One has only to examine the provision relating to the amendment to the Constitution. The Assembly has not only refrained from putting a seal of finality and infallibility upon this Constitution by denying to the people the right to amend the Constitution as in Canada or by making the amendment of the Constitution subject to the fulfilment of extraordinary terms and conditions as in America or Australia, but has provided a most facile procedure for amending the Constitution. I challenge any of the critics of the Constitution to prove that any Constituent Assembly anywhere in the world has in the circumstances in which this country finds itself, provided such a facile procedure for the amendment of the Constitution. If those who are dissatisfied with the Constitution cannot obtain even a two-thirds majority in the Parliament elected on adult franchise in their favour, their dissatisfaction with the Constitution cannot be deemed to be shared by the general public.

There is only one point of constitutional importance to which I propose to make a reference. A serious complaint is made on the ground that there is too much of centralization and that the States have been reduced to Municipalities. It is clear that this view is not only an exaggeration, but is also founded on a misunderstanding of what exactly the Constitution contrives to do. As to the relation between the Centre and the States, it is necessary to bear in mind the fundamental principle on which it rests. The basic principle of Federalism is that the Legislative and Executive authority is partitioned between the Centre and the States not by any law to be made by the Centre but by the Constitution itself. This is what Constitution does.

The States under our Constitution are in no way dependent upon the Centre for their legislative or executive authority. The Centre and the States are co-equal in this matter. It is difficult to say how such a Constitution can be called centralism. It may be that the Constitution assigns to the Centre too large a field for the operation of its legislative and executive authority than is to be found in any other federal Constitution. It may be that the residuary powers are given to the Centre and not to the States. But these features do not form the essence of federalism. The chief mark of federalism as I said lies in the partition of the legislative and executive authority between the Centre and the Units by the Constitution. This is the principle embodied in our Constitution. There can be no mistake about it. It is, therefore, wrong to say that the States have been placed under the Centre. Centre cannot by its own will alter the boundary of that partition, nor can the Judiciary. For as has been well said:

> Courts may modify, they cannot replace, They can revise earlier interpretations as new arguments, new points of view are presented; They can shift the dividing line in marginal cases, but there are barriers, they cannot pass; definite assignments of power they cannot reallocate. They can give a broadening construction of existing powers, but they cannot assign to one authority powers explicitly granted to another.

The first charge of centralization defeating federalism must therefore fall.

The second charge is that the Centre has been given the power to override the States. This charge must be admitted. But before condemning the Constitution for containing such overriding powers, certain considerations must be borne in mind. The first is that these overriding powers do not form the normal features of the Constitution. Their use and operation are expressly confined to emergencies only. The second consideration is, could we avoid giving overriding powers to the Centre when an emergency has arisen? Those who do not admit the justification for such overriding powers to the Centre even in an emergency do not seem to have a clear idea of the problem which lies at the root of the matter. The problem is clearly set out by a writer in that well-known magazine. 'The Round Table', in its issue of December, 1935 that I offer no apology for quoting the following extract from it. Says the writer:

> Political systems are a complex duties resting ultimately on the question, to whom, or to what authority, does the citizen owe allegiance. In normal

affairs the question is not present, for the law works smoothly, and a man goes about his business obeying one authority in this set of matters and another authority in that. But in a moment of crisis, a conflict of claims may arise, and it is then apparent that ultimate allegiance cannot be divided. The issue of allegiance cannot be determined in the last resort by a juristic interpretation of statutes. The law must conform to the facts of so much the worse for the law. When all formalism is stripped away, the bare question is, what authority commands the residual loyalty of the citizen. Is it the Centre or the Constituent States?

The solution of this problem depends upon one's answer to this question which is the crux of the problem. There can be no doubts that in the opinion of the vast majority of the people, the residual loyalty of the citizen in any emergency must be to the Centre and not to the Constituent States. For it is only the Centre which can work for a common end and for the general interests of the country as a whole. Herein lies the justification for giving to the Centre certain overriding powers to be used in an emergency. And after all what is the obligation imposed upon the Constituent States by these emergency powers? No more than this that in an emergency, they should take into consideration along side their own local interest, the opinion and interests of the nation as a whole. Only those who have not understood the problem, can complain against it.

Here I could have ended. But my mind is so full of the future of our country that I feel I ought to take this occasion to give expression to some of my reflections thereon.

On 26th January 1950, India will be an independent country. What would happen to her independence? Will she maintain her independence or will she lose it again? This is the first thought that comes to my mind. It is not that India was never an independent country. The point is that she once lost the independence she had. Will she lose it a second time? It is this thought which makes me most anxious for the future. What perturbs me greatly is the fact that not only India has once before lost her independence, but she lost it by the treachery of some of her own people. In the invasion of Sind by Mohammed-Bin-Kasim, the military commanders of King Dahar accepted bribes from the agents of Mohammed-Bin-Kasim and refused to fight on the side of their King. It was Jaichand who invited Mohammmed Ghori to invade India and fight against Prithvi Raj and promised him the help of himself and the Solanki Kings. When Shivaji was fighting for the liberation of Hindus, the other

Maratha noblemen and the Rajput Kings were fighting the battle on the side of Moghul Emperors. When the British were trying to destory the Sikh Rulers, Gulab Singh their principal commander sat silent and did not help to save the Sikh kingdom. In 1857, when a large part of India had declared a war of independence against the British, the Sikhs stood and watched the event as silent spectators.

Will history repeat itself? It is this thought which fills me with anxiety. This anxiety is deepened by the realization of the fact that in addition to our old enemies in the form of castes and creeds we are going to have many political parties with diverse and opposing political creeds. Will Indians place the country above creed or will they place creed above country? I do not know. But this much is certain that if the parties place creed above country, our independence will be put in jeopardy a second time and probably be lost for ever. This eventuality we must all resolutely guard against. We must be determined to defend our independence with the last drop of our blood.

On the 26th of January 1950, India would be a democratic country in the sense that India from that day would have a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The same thought comes to my mind. What would happen to her democratic Constitution? Will she be able to maintain it or will she lose it again. This is the second thought that comes to my mind and makes me as anxious as the first.

It is not that India did not know what is Democracy. There was a time when India was studded within Republics and where there were monarchies, they were either elected or limited. They were never absolute. It is not that India did not know Parliaments or Parliamentary Procedure. A study of the Buddhist Bhikshu Sanghas discloses that not only there were Parliaments—for the Sanghas were nothing but Parliaments—but the Sanghas knew and observed all the rules of Parliamentary procedure known to modern times. They had rules regarding seating arrangements, rules regarding Motions, Resolutions, Quorum, Whip, Counting of Votes, Voting by Ballot, Censure Motion, Regularization, Res Judicata, etc. Although these rules of Parliamentary Procedure were applied by the Buddha to the meetings of the Bhikshu Sangha, he must have borrowed them from the rules of the political Assemblies functioning in the country in his time.

This democratic system India lost. Will she lose it a second time? I

do not know. But it is quite possible in a country like India—where democracy from its long disuse must be regarded as something quite new—there is danger of democracy giving place to dictatorship. It is quite possible for this new born democracy to retain its form but give place to dictatorship in fact. If there is a landslide, the danger of the second possibility becoming actuality is much greater.

If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgement we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution. It means that we must abandon the methods of civil disobedience, non-co-operation and satyagarha. When there was no way left for constitutional methods for achieving economic and social objectives, there was some justification for unconstitutional methods achieving economic and social objectives. But where constitutional methods are open, there can be no justification for these unconstitutional methods. These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned the better for us.

The second thing we must do is to observe the caution which John Stuart Mill has given to all who are interested in the maintenance of democracy, namely not 'to lay their liberties at the feet of even a great man, or to trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions'.

There is nothing wrong in being grateful to great men for their life-long services to the country. But there are limits to gratefulness. As has been well said by the Irish Patriot Daniel O'Conrell, 'no man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity, and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.' This caution is far necessary in the case of India than in the case of any other country. For in India, 'Bhakti' or what may be called the path of devotion or hero-worship, plays a part in its politics unequalled in magnitude by the part it plays in the politics of any other part of the world. 'Bhakti' in religion may be a road to the salvation of the soul. But in politics, 'Bhakti' or hero-worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship.

The third thing we must do is not be content with mere political democracy. We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a

way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supermacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them. We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian society. One of these is equality. On the social plane we have in India a society based on the principle of graded inequality which means elevation for some and degradation for others. On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who are in abject poverty. On the 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognizing the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by .putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.

The second thing we are wanting in is recognition of the principle of fraternity. What does fraternity mean? Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians, all Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life. It is a difficult thing to achieve. How difficult it is, can be realized from the story related by James Bryce in his volume on American Commonwealth about the United States of America. The story is—I propose to recount it in the words of Bryce himself that :

> Some years ago the American Protestant Episcopal Church was occupied at its triennial Convention in revising its liturgy. It was thought desirable to

introduce among the short sentence Papers of prayers, a prayer for the whole people, and aneminent New England divine proposed the words. 'O Lord, bless our Nation'. Accepted one afternoon, on the spur of the moment, the sentence was brought up next day for reconsideration, when so many objections were raised by the laity to the word 'nation', as importing too definite a recognition of national unity, that it was dropped, and instead there were adopted the words 'O Lord, bless these United States'.

There was so little solidarity in the USA at the time, when this incident occurred that the people of America did not think that they were a nation. If the people of the United States could not feel that they were a nation, how difficult it is for Indians to think that they are a nation. I remember the days when politically-minded Indians resented the expression 'the people of India'. They preferred the expression 'The Indian nation'. I am of opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realize that we are not as yet a nation in the social and psychological sense of the word, the better of us. For then only we shall realize the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think of ways and means of realizing the goal. The realization of this goal is going to be very difficult, far more difficult than it has been in the United States. The United States has no caste problem. In India there are castes. These castes are anti-national; in the first place because they bring about separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. For fraternity can be a fact only when there is a nation. Without fraternity, equality and liberty will be no deeper than coats of paint.

These are my reflections about the tasks that lie ahead of us. They may not be very pleasant to some. But there can be no gainsaying that political power in this country has too long been the monopoly of a few and the many are not only beasts of burden, but also beasts of prey. This monopoly has not merely deprived them of their chance of betterment, it has sapped them of what may be called the significance of life. Those downtrodden classes are tired of being governed. They are impatient to govern themselves. This urge for self-realization in the downtrodden classes must not be allowed to devolve into a class struggle or class war. It would lead to a division

of the House. That would indeed be a day of disaster. For, as has been well said by Abraham Lincoln, 'a House divided against itself cannot stand very long.' 'Therefore, the sooner room is made for the realization of their aspiration, the better for the few, better for the country, the better for the maintenance of its independence and the better for the continuance of its democratic structure. This can only be done by the establishment of equality and fraternity in all sphéres of life. That is why I have laid so much stress on them.

I do not wish to weary the House any further. Independence is no doubt a matter of joy. But let us not forget that this independence has thrown on us great responsibilities. By independence, we have lost the excuse of blaming the British for anything going wrong. If hereafter things go wrong we will have nobody to blame except ourselves. There is great danger of things going wrong. Times are fast changing. People including our own are being moved by new ideologies. They are getting tired of Government by the people. They are prepared to have Government for the people and are indifferent whether it is Government of the people and by the people. If we wish to preserve the Constitution in which we have sought to enshrine the principle of Government of the people and by the people, let us resolve not to be tardy in the recognition of the evils that lie across our path and which induce people to prefer Government for the people to Government by the people, nor to be weak in our initiative to remove them. That is the only way to serve the country. I know of no better.

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